

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF NEWLY POSTED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN
THE RURAL AQUACULTURE PROMOTION PROJECT IN ZAMBIA**

A Thesis

by

CLAY ALLEN TRANT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2004

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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ABSTRACT

Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Newly Posted Peace Corps Volunteers in the
Rural Aquaculture Promotion Project in Zambia.

(May 2004)

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The Rural Aquaculture Promotion (RAP) project is a vital development initiative by the Peace Corps in Zambia with the goal of increasing the nutritional and caloric intake of rural Zambian farmers in addition to augmenting income (Peace Corps Zambia rural aquaculture promotion, n.d.). Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) success in achieving the goals of the RAP project is vital, and because PCVs are on site working on projects in the aquaculture assignment area for only 24 months, and as only three generations of PCVs are placed at a given site, it is imperative that they be able to contribute to these projects very promptly after arrival on site.

The overriding issue concerning the effectiveness of the Peace Corps development effort is the job performance of the individual PCV which primarily depends on the PCV's ability to transfer learned knowledge and skills to the workplace. Many PCVs are routinely hampered by an inability to achieve significant and continuous contributions to projects within their assignment area. The Peace Corps' fundamental approach to the diffusion of aquaculture in Zambia is centered on the exchange of information between PCVs and rural farmers. Achieving sustainability with the RAP project is essentially based upon the consistency and longevity of this information exchange. PCVs are

instructed in very specific technical procedures concerning all aspects of fish farming during pre-service training in order to ensure that they are equipped to diffuse a standardized technical curriculum to project beneficiaries. In addition, volunteers are trained in language and cross-cultural skills, and throughout the pre-service training period are assessed by the training staff for competence in the behavioral areas of motivation, productive competence, and adaptability/social sensitivity.

Deficiencies in language and cross-cultural skills, the detrimental psychological effects of culture and role shock, and a lack of agency planning and support were key factors that affected the PCVs' ability to transfer successfully learned skills to the workplace. The lack of language ability was identified as the most substantial factor affecting the Volunteer's on-site job performance. Given the social nature of rural extension efforts, this has serious implications for Volunteer effectiveness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The idea for the United States Peace Corps, billed initially as an “international volunteer organization,” was first introduced by Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy during a campaign stop at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor campus in 1960 (*About Peace Corps History, decades of service*, n.d., para. 1). Later, in his inaugural address, President Kennedy refined his vision of the Peace Corps by calling on Americans to participate in a new endeavor, declaring, “To those people in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves” (*About Peace Corps History, the 1960s*, n.d., para. 1).

On March 1, 1961, President Kennedy officially established the Peace Corps by signing Executive Order 10924. The essence of the Peace Corps’ three main goals as established in the United States Peace Corps Act (United States Peace Corps, 1961) have remained constant:

- 1) To work at the grassroots level with people of the host countries in sustainable development activities that will improve the conditions of their lives;

This thesis follows the style and format of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

- 2) To foster improved mutual understanding and build links between the American people and the people of host countries;
- 3) To demonstrate, through the personal commitment of the Volunteers, the interest and involvement of American citizens in the welfare of people of other countries that is distinct and separate from the official relations and policies of governments.

In 2002, the Peace Corps' budget of \$275 million (Office of Management and Budget, n.d.) supported approximately 7,000 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) working in 69 countries worldwide (*About Peace Corps fast facts*, n.d.). Since the first group of Volunteers entered service in 1961, more than 169,000 Americans have heeded President Kennedy's call to engage in international service by serving in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps' development efforts include assignment areas that focus on business, education, environment, agriculture, health, and community development. In addition, HIV/AIDS prevention and education and information technology development are current special areas of focus (*About Peace Corps fast facts*, n.d.).

The Peace Corps undertakes development projects in the above areas as a coordinated effort to "help people develop the capacity to improve their own lives" (*Programming and Training Booklet 1: The Basics*, 2001). MacCracken (1977) concurred with this basic definition of development, and went further by saying that development "is a process of stepping from one evolutionary moment to the next; from relief to self-help to development outreach to selfhood, determination, and decision" (p.

18). Each assignment area to which the Peace Corps commits Volunteers is meant to help beneficiaries progress along this evolutionary continuum by addressing the various interconnected development needs within a society. Within this development scheme, agricultural projects are vital.

Agricultural assignments comprise a relatively small proportion of the Peace Corps' overall development activity, with the number of PCVs assigned to agriculture-related projects comprising only about 9% of all Volunteers (*About Peace Corps fast facts*, n.d.). The general goal of the PCVs working in the agricultural assignment area is to "help farmers increase income through farming techniques that are consistent with environmental conservation by working collaboratively with farmers in projects such as vegetable gardening, livestock management, agroforestry, and fresh-water fisheries or aquaculture" (*Peace Corps assignments: Opportunities in agriculture*, n.d., para. 2). In the instances where farmers produce at the subsistence level, the Peace Corps' efforts are concentrated on teaching sustainable farming techniques that also improve crop yield such as the prevention of soil erosion, reduction of the use of harmful pesticides, and general soil improvement, while for those farmers who are producing in a commercial capacity (i.e., surplus production is routinely sold at market), agricultural Volunteers concentrate mainly on implementing or improving agribusiness programs, in addition to improved agricultural practices and techniques. (*Peace Corps assignments: Opportunities in agriculture*, n.d.). In Zambia, PCVs primarily work with farmers who produce at the subsistence level.

In 1996, the Peace Corps began conducting aquaculture projects in Zambia as a collaborative effort between the Zambian Department of Fisheries (DOF) and the U.S. Peace Corps. The Peace Corps' aquaculture program in Zambia has undergone several name changes since its inception, but in this study it will be referred to by its current name, the Rural Aquaculture Promotion (RAP) project. The current goals of the RAP project include "improved yield of rural farmer's ponds- to 3000 kg/hectare/year, improved fish farmer per capita income- increase of over 170%, fish farmer independence, retraining of fish culture extension agents, and development of an appropriate national plan for rural aquaculture" (*Peace Corps Zambia rural aquaculture promotion*, n.d., para. 1). In addition, "ongoing challenges in the field such as localized fingerling production, identification of efficient local inputs, and harvest marketing" are also being addressed (*Peace Corps Zambia rural aquaculture promotion*, n.d., para. 1).

In order to equip PCVs with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to train potential fish farmers effectively, the Peace Corps conducts a three-month training program at the Pre-service Training Center in Mwekera, Zambia. (*Peace Corps Zambia background information*, n.d.). The overall goal of the RAP project's pre-service training (PST) program is to train PCVs as rural aquaculture extension agents. The RAP project's PST curriculum encompasses knowledge and skills ranging from technical competence in pond construction and maintenance to cross-cultural understanding and foreign language ability.

Statement of the Problem

According to the United Nations World Food Program, Zambia was classified as a least developed, low-income, food-deficit country in 2003. A Peace Corps country assessment of Zambia in early 1992 found that a lack of adequate nutritional input and low income were eminent threats to the security and welfare of the people of Zambia (*Peace Corps countries Zambia*, n.d.). The RAP project seeks to increase the nutritional and caloric intake of rural Zambians in addition to augmenting income (*Peace Corps Zambia rural aquaculture promotion*, n.d.). PCV success in achieving the goals of the RAP project is vital, and because PCVs are on site working on projects in the aquaculture assignment area for only 24 months, it is imperative that they are able to contribute to these projects in an effective manner very promptly after arrival on site.

The notion that each PCV has a unique experience while serving is a cliché within the Peace Corps community. Despite the uniqueness of the ‘Peace Corps experience,’ even the casual observer will note that each PCV serving in the RAP project in Zambia confronts the same set of general problems and obstacles during service. The overriding issue concerning the effectiveness of the Peace Corps’ development efforts in Zambia is the job performance of the individual PCV. While there are PCVs that prove to be exceptions, most are routinely hampered by an inability to achieve significant and continuous contributions to projects within their assignment area. Unfortunately, opinions vary and evidence is mixed as to what factors contribute to making effective contributions promptly, particularly with respect to those working on aquaculture projects.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that inhibit or facilitate the ability of PCVs to contribute promptly and effectively to projects in aquaculture in Zambia, once posted to their sites.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based upon Rogers' (2003) conception of the diffusion of innovations and the role of the change agent in this process. The innovation-diffusion process is undertaken by a change agent for the purpose of securing the adoption of an innovation by communicating the different aspects of that innovation through the various communication channels of a social system. Interpersonal communication is the most essential activity in the diffusion process and the concepts of homophily, the degree to which individuals are similar in areas such as culture, education, and language, and heterophily, the degree to which they are dissimilar in areas such as these, are important characteristics of change agent/beneficiary communication.

Rogers (2003) discussed the role of the change agent in the innovation-diffusion process at great length. The change agent's main responsibility is to influence the client's opinions "in a direction deemed desirable..." (p. 335). The change agent accomplishes this through a two-way information exchange with the intended beneficiaries. Indeed, Rogers pointed out that change agents would not be needed if an information gap caused by heterophily did not exist between the change agent and the

beneficiary. For this information exchange to be beneficial and useful, the change agent must possess appropriate technical competence of the innovation being diffused in addition to the language ability and cross-cultural knowledge that will render communication as effective and productive.

As stated above, the diffusion process is based upon the information exchange between the change agent and beneficiary and effective interpersonal communication is vital. Communication among homophilous individuals involves little effort and is comparatively more efficient, but because these individuals are similar, their communication is likely to have low informational value, meaning both individuals are likely to possess the same knowledge and information. Conversely, heterophilous individuals will find communication more difficult in general, but the information that is exchanged will have a greater informational value. Heterophily between the change agent and the beneficiary can act as a barrier to productivity and affect change agent effectiveness because it can potentially cause “message distortion, delayed transmission, restricted channels, and cognitive dissonance” (Rogers, 1976). Peace Corps Volunteers are routinely in situations where they are heterophilous with the intended beneficiaries of Peace Corps projects. It was proposed that the hindrances that RAP project PCVs encountered in the performance of extension activities are largely a result of this high degree of heterophily between the Volunteer and the project beneficiary and the inadequacies of the pre-service training in equipping PCVs with the knowledge and skills needed to work in the capacity of extension agents in a cross-cultural environment. Further, it was conceptualized that the factors that enabled PCVs to make contributions

more promptly (or quicker) would also result in an enhancement of Volunteer performance overall.

The phenomenon of culture shock is directly related to the concept of heterophily between the change agent and beneficiary. Often, a so-called cultural divide is the cause of these differences; the change agent must live within another culture, often for an extended time, in order to manage the diffusion of an innovation. This immersion into another culture can cause culture shock and role shock/strain. In order to be effective, a change agent must not merely be able to survive in another culture, he or she must thrive in it (Byrnes, 1966). An individual cannot hope to thrive in a cross-cultural environment without the proper preparation, which serves to ameliorate the inevitable negative effects of culture shock and aids in preventing role shock/strain from occurring (Byrnes, 1966; Juarez, 1972).

Based on the above information and the review of the literature, the following statements summarize the theoretical base of the study:

1. Change agents must be technically competent to be effective.
2. Change agents must have the appropriate cross-cultural skills to be effective.
3. Change agents must be able to communicate with intended beneficiaries to be effective.

Research Questions

Based on the theoretical framework, the following questions were developed to accomplish the purpose of the study:

1. What types of assignment-specific technical and cultural training did the PCVs receive prior to site placement?
2. How effective was the pre-service training program in facilitating the transfer of learned technical, language, and cultural knowledge and skills to the work environment?
3. How did the psychological effects of culture shock and role shock affect the PCV's ability to function effectively as a change agent?

Importance of Study

This study focused on “prompt” and “effective” contributions by PCVs to assignment-related projects. These terms were not defined for the study, as part of this study's value was in allowing PCVs to define these terms. With this caveat asserted, it is necessary to explain what was not meant by the notion of a “prompt” contribution. The notion of a prompt contribution did not imply immediate, but instead more quickly or in a lesser amount of time.

Furthermore, while this study focused on aquaculture assignments in Zambia, the recommendations that were made for improving the initial performance and effectiveness of PCVs can conceivably be applied to PCVs working in other countries and with different assignments. Additionally, Non-Governmental Organizations that perform international development activities, utilize volunteers, and operate at the grass roots level will find that the recommendations that were made in this study can be transferred to their programs.

Delimitations

This study included 17 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who served in Zambia in the assignment area of aquaculture between the years of 1997 and 2002 who had access to e-mail and expressed interest in participating in the study by contacting the researcher.

Limitations

It is recognized that the following limitations exist in the study:

1. Due to the unique nature of Peace Corps service, findings and conclusions may not be transferable to people who are not working as Peace Corps Volunteers in an agricultural assignment.
2. The respondent pool included only those participants who volunteered to participate, and due to IRB regulations, the researcher was unable to use snowball sampling in order to augment the sample size. Consequently, some viewpoints and experiences may not have been reported that would have provided additional insight and bases for conclusions.
3. The researchers had no control over the documents provided by the Peace Corps as a response to the Freedom of Information Act Request. Consequently, information in documents pertinent to this study may have been omitted.

4. Shades of meaning with attendant differences may have existed in the way in which respondents interpret the terms “effective,” “significant,” “quickly,” “promptly,” and “contribution.”

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in order to complete the study:

1. Respondent experiences and opinions were representative of other RPCVs who had worked in the RAP project in Zambia.
2. The survey instrument accurately obtained participants’ perceptions on the issues questioned.

Definitions of Terms and Acronyms

The terms and acronyms listed below are used throughout the study.

Aquaculture – the raising and harvesting of fresh- and saltwater plants and animals.

COS (Close of Service) – The action taken at the end of the satisfactory completion of a term of service that officially separates the PCV from the Peace Corps.

ET (Early Terminate) – The act of a PCT or PCV leaving the Peace Corps before satisfactorily completing a term of service.

PCT (Peace Corps Trainee) – An individual who is undergoing pre-service training in preparation for service as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

PCV (Peace Corps Volunteer) – A sworn-in Volunteer in the U.S. Peace Corps.

PST (Pre-service Training) – The training period preceding Peace Corps service

RAP (Rural Aquaculture Promotion) project – Peace Corps development initiative in Zambia to promote aquaculture among rural farmers.

RPCV (Returned Peace Corps Volunteer) – Title given to a PCV upon COS.

Tilapia – Any member of the genus *Tilapia*, spiny-finned freshwater fish of the family Cichlidae, native chiefly to Africa and the Middle East.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The tendency of PCVs to be ineffective for an often-substantial period following the site posting can be viewed as a problem within effective job performance caused by various issues predominantly associated with heterophily. As such, factors that are known to influence negatively job performance in general and in cross-cultural environments specifically are applicable. The two primary areas that were proposed to account for the ineffectiveness of PCVs were inadequate or incomplete preparation of PCVs during pre-service training and the cumulative negative impact of culture shock and role shock/strain

PCV Preparation

As cited in Noe (1986), Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick (1970) have defined training as “a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual’s knowledge, attitudes, or skills” (p. 736). Mathieu, Tannenbaum, and Salas (1992) echoed this assessment by stating that individuals rely on training programs to improve current skills and learn new ones. Basically, training programs equip the trainees’ with competencies, or a set of complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities (Lindner & Dooley, 2002).

The PST program for the RAP project in Zambia is meant to equip the Peace Corps Trainees (PCTs) with the competencies needed to serve effectively as extension agents.

The training curriculum is divided into a technical component, which consists of subjects such as agricultural extension, pond management, and appropriate technology, and a non-technical component that includes, for example, cultural knowledge, language ability, and safety awareness. In addition to these components, PCTs are also evaluated on behavioral objectives such as motivation, productive competence, and cultural adaptability and social sensitivity (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002).

Specifically, issues related to PCV preparation potentially include problems with the structure of the training program, the appropriateness of learned knowledge and skills to the work environment, and the transferability of acquired competencies from the training environment to the work environment. First, for PST to be effective, the program design must facilitate equipping the PCTs with technical, cultural, and language knowledge and skills as well as the attitude needed to transfer successfully the technical component of the assignment curriculum to the intended beneficiaries. Next, the notion of the appropriateness of the PST curriculum involves the degree of applicability of the competencies that are taught to the PCTs during the PST program to the specific and unique characteristics, such as geography, climate, and culture of the actual work environment. Last, PCVs must not only be taught the necessary competencies to be successful, but these competencies must be transferable to the work environment.

Transfer of Training

Generally, the effectiveness of a training program can be evaluated by assessing the trainee's success in transferring the training received to the job (Tracy, Tannenbaum, &

Kavanagh, 1995). In a 1988 study, Baldwin and Ford defined transfer of training as the generalization of the skills acquired during the training phase to the work environment and the maintenance of these acquired skills over time. In the same study, they also isolated three aspects that relate to the degree of transferability of training to the workplace: 1) training design factors or course characteristics (Baldwin, 1987; Cominsky, 1982; Decker, 1982; Goldstein, 1986) such as appropriateness and applicability of what is learned to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Goldstein, 1986) and methods of learning utilized (Decker, 1982); 2) critical trainee characteristics (Ford, Quinones, Sego, and Sarra, 1992; Gist, Bavetta, and Stevens 1990; Gordon and Kleiman, 1976; Hicks and Klimosky, 1987; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991) such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Ford, et al., 1992; Gist et al., 1990; Tannenbaum et al., 1991) motivation (Mathieu et al., 1992; Noe, 1986), and ability (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Tannenbaum et al., 1991) and, 3) work-environment factors (Baumgartel, Reynolds, and Patton, 1984; Ford et al, 1992; Huczynski and Lewis, 1980; Tracy, Tannenbaum, and Kavanagh, 1995; Vandenput, 1973) such as managerial support (Ford et al., 1992; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980), employee freedom and job autonomy (Huczynski & Lewis, 1980; Vandenput, 1973), and the overall climate of the training program (Tracey et al., 1995).

Training Design Factors

Design elements are a critical part of the overall training design for achieving transfer of training (Campbell, 1988). Three of the methods of learning that were

identified by Baldwin and Ford (1988), identical elements, general principles, and stimulus variability, have proven critical in empirical studies concerning the effectiveness of training programs to impart skills to trainees. An instructional paradigm that incorporates facets of these three methods of learning that has been defined simply as “learning from past experiences or learning by doing” is known as experiential learning (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 5).

The process of engaging learners in experiential education involves immersion in an experience and then encouraging reflection on the experience for the purpose of developing new skills, attitudes, and strategies for approaching problems (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Kolb (1984) pioneered the concept of experiential learning and envisioned it as the most effective method for linking theory and practice. Additionally, an extensive quantitative study by Mok (1999) demonstrated that experiential learning techniques had a more positive impact on learners in many functional aspects when compared to lecture and textbook-guided learning. For experiential education to be most effective, training programs must include identical elements in the initial experience, general principles to aid in reflection on the experience, and stimulus variability to encourage the conceptualization of different approaches to solving problems.

The idea of identical elements was first introduced by Thorndike and Woodworth (1901) who proposed that the more the stimulus and response elements are alike in both the training and work environment, the more effective and complete the transfer of training will be. In other words, the extent to which the training environment is like the work environment will have significant implications on the ability of the trainee to apply

what was learned in training to the ‘real-world’ setting. This is significant for aquaculture PCVs, as pond construction and management situations often arise with which PCVs are unfamiliar and subsequently face ambiguity in determining a solution. To the extent possible, pre-service training should utilize identical elements to ensure that PCVs rarely encounter technical dilemmas or problems for the first time at their site.

The second instructional method, general principles, as proposed by McGehee & Thayer (1961), suggests that the trainees’ ability to apply learned skills in the workplace is facilitated if the training program teaches “general rules and theoretical principles that underline the training content” (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p. 67). While it is usually unnecessary that farmers understand the theories behind aquaculture techniques, this knowledge of principles can boost PCVs’ confidence in their ability to serve as extension agents.

Ellis (1965) describes the notion of stimulus variability as providing the trainee with multiple examples of the application of a learned concept or skill. The rationale for this approach is that the greater variety of practical examples of a learned concept to which a trainee is exposed, the more likely the trainee is to see the applicability of the new concept to the work setting. During PST, it is not possible to simulate every situation a PCV could encounter in the work environment; but, exposure to multiple empirical examples of the application of learned knowledge and skills increases the ability to generalize and apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations.

Any training program that seeks to transfer a vast amount of information to trainees in a relatively brief time, such as the RAP project PST program, must guard against

information overload (Keller & Staelin, 1987; Schneider, 1987), defined by Schneider (1987) as the point where the information-processing requirements exceeds the trainees' information-processing abilities. The nature of the information presented is a primary factor in the occurrence of information overload and indicators include the degree to which the trainee perceives a discrepancy in the information received and the information deemed necessary once placed in the work environment, the possibility that a trainee may interpret information in a different way than the trainers intended, the degree to which the information presented is perceived as novel or relevant to future work situations, the overall complexity to the information, and the intensity with which information is presented (Schneider, 1987).

Personal Characteristics of the Trainee

A wide variety of personal characteristics of the trainee that could potentially affect the success of the transfer of training have been identified in the literature (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). For this study, the personal characteristics of self-efficacy, motivation, and ability were paramount.

Self-efficacy is “faith in ones ability to perform successfully” (Axtell & Maitlis, 1997, p. 203), and was observed to have a direct impact on the initial performance levels of trainees (Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991). If trainees complete the training program with confidence in acquired competencies, then not only will they approach job tasks with more confidence, but they will be more likely to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity or obstacles (Marx, 1982). Further, trainees that lack self-efficacy will put

forth less effort in training (Bandura, 1982; Latham & Frayne, 1989), which can decrease the usefulness of the training program.

A trainee characteristic that is closely related to achieving a sense of self-efficacy is motivation, which acts to instill and preserve trainee enthusiasm during the learning process, functions as a stimulus that encourages the trainee to assimilate and synthesize new information, and influences the trainee to utilize newly acquired knowledge and skills in the face of hardship once in the work environment (Steers & Porter, 1975). As noted by Elangovan and Karakowsky, factors related to the level of trainee motivation include the perceived relevance of the training, whether the trainee had a choice in attending training, outcome expectancies, and job-involvement (1999). Empirical studies have shown that trainees who value the training (Baumgartel et al., 1984), have a choice in whether to attend the training program (Hicks & Klimosky, 1987), believe that using learned knowledge and skills will bring about desired outcomes (Bandura, 1982), and identify psychologically with the job will be much more likely to transfer successfully training to the work place (Blau & Boal, 1987).

Last, the trainees' ability in the areas of knowledge acquisition and situation identification directly affects positive transfer of training. Knowledge acquisition refers to the ability of the trainee to acquire and assimilate new skills and information. This process is also known as knowledge gain, and trainees who are more adept at it will be able to assimilate the training curriculum to a greater degree resulting in an improved ability to transfer competencies more completely. Situational identification is the application of the training to actual job tasks and can be viewed as a function of

knowledge acquisition. The application of training requires the ability to recognize situations where newly acquired knowledge and skills can be utilized to solve problems encountered in the work place. This ability is greatly enhanced if the trainee achieved a high level of knowledge acquisition (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999).

Work Environment Factors

Work environment factors are those characteristics of the workplace that act to either impede or assist transfer of training, and can be separated into factors pertaining to the job and those that are related to the employer. If the employees' job does not offer the opportunity, whether immediate or long-term, to apply newly acquired competencies, then transfer of training cannot take place. Further, if the employee is unable to apply newly acquired competencies in a reasonable amount of time after completing the training program, the employees' overall ability to transfer learned knowledge and skills decreases significantly (Gagne, 1962; Gist et al, 1990).

Next, the amount of supervisory support available once trainees return to the workplace has a direct affect on transfer of training. This support can take the form of encouragement to use newly acquired skills, guidance in the use of these skills, feedback, positive reinforcement, etc., all of which facilitate the transfer of training (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986). Support and guidance from a supervisor will generally have an overall positive effect on the transfer of training process and will improve the trainees' willingness to apply acquired competencies to the job (Huczynski & Lewis, 1980).

Finally, employer or organization-related work environment factors include rewards systems and the overall organizational culture. It has been shown that a strong direct link exists between the successful transfer of training and an organization's system for recognizing and rewarding trainees for doing so. Simply, trainees are more likely to utilize learned competencies on the job if this garners a reward (Vroom, 1964). In addition, the culture of the organization can have a significant effect on the transfer of training. An organization's culture includes aspects such as the encouragement of individual initiative, stance towards risk-taking, and whether or not innovation is actively encouraged (Schein, 1985). As cited in Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999), a study by Baumgartel et al. (1984), found that "an organizational climate characterized by high appreciation for performance and innovation had a high impact on the application of trained skills" (p. 272). In general, an organizational culture that cultivates employee development of learned competencies and encourages continual progress and personal growth will positively affect transfer of training.

Also relevant in assembling a theoretical framework with which to analyze factors affecting the job performance of PCVs are the notions of culture shock and role shock and strain. PCVs are subjected to a simultaneous bombardment of culture shock and role shock/strain and the associated detrimental psychological processes aid in the explanation of the hardships, both emotional and physical, which can affect job productivity.

Culture Shock

The notion of culture and its function as a unifying agent between the individual and society is central to understanding the psychological effects experienced when an individual experiences culture shock. Applying a single, generally accepted definition to ‘culture’ can be a daunting task. In an exhaustive study, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) listed over 160 definitions for culture that were collected from scholars in a variety of disciplines. Using Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s study as a guide, Black and Mendenhall (1990) derived a composite definition, proposing that culture “consists of patterns and behaviors that are acquired and transmitted over time, which become generally shared by a group and are communicated to new members of the group in order to serve as a cognitive guide or blueprint for future actions” (p. 120). When an individual is immersed in a foreign culture, the subconscious foundations for performing everyday tasks are lost (Triandis, Vassiliou, Tanaka, & Shanmugam, 1972), which precipitates the onset of culture shock.

Culture shock has been described as “the result of stress overload...caused by the barrage of hundreds of jarring and disorienting incidents” (Copeland & Griggs, 1985, p. 195) and is “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all one’s familiar cues” (Oberg, 1960, p. 177). Anderson (1971) perceives culture shock as a “massive psychic reaction” that results in a “failure in response mechanisms...” (p. 1121). The stages of culture shock have been well documented and while it has been observed that the extremity of the effects and the duration of the symptoms of culture shock vary depending on the characteristics of the individual and the new culture (Hawes & Kealey,

1981; Spradley & Phillips, 1972), it is possible to identify factors that can serve as predictors of overall expatriate adjustment to another culture.

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) identified three “dimensions” from the literature that are part of the “expatriate adjustment process” that are relevant to this study: the “self-oriented” dimension, the “other-oriented” dimension, and the “perceptual” dimension (p. 40). Similarly, Hawes and Kealey (1981) noted the three applicable categories of personal/family adjustment, task accomplishment, and intercultural interaction as predictors of “overseas effectiveness” (p. 250). Combining Mendenhall and Oddou’s dimensions of expatriate adjustment and Hawes and Kealey’s categories of expatriate overseas effectiveness, it is possible to construct two general areas of indicators of the success an expatriate will have in adjusting to and working within a new cultural environment.

The first area is defined by the concept of the self-oriented dimension, and can be described as consisting of “activities that strengthen the expatriate’s self-esteem, self-confidence, and mental hygiene” (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985, p. 40). Within this area are the activities that center on personal/family adjustment and task accomplishment. Empirical studies indicate that expatriates who were deemed to have adjusted well to a new cultural environment displayed personal indicators such as expressed satisfaction in living overseas, engaging in enjoyable activities, being successful in coping with everyday tasks, in addition to task accomplishment indicators such as possessing the proper job-related technical background, expressed and demonstrated job commitment,

and achievement of job-related tasks, duties, and responsibilities (Hawes and Kealey, 1981).

The second area of cross-cultural adjustment predictors includes the others-oriented and perceptual dimensions. This area is characterized by the expatriate's ability to relate effectively to, empathize with, and understand the reasons behind the actions of host country nationals (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). The indicators that signal effective intercultural communication and interaction are establishing friendships with local people, learning the local language and non-verbal communication, and knowledge of local history, culture, politics, and current events (Hawes and Kealey, 1981).

Training programs that neglect to address the key indicators that comprise these areas will fail to prepare completely and adequately an individual for working in another culture, possibly leading to poor job performance (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). Additionally, individuals who possess the skills needed to perform the tasks encompassed in these dimensions have been shown to adapt to cross-cultural environments more successfully (Brein & David, 1971; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Role Shock/Strain

Before defining role shock and role strain, it is necessary to delineate certain terms that often have ambiguous or multiple meanings. First, an individual's position and role in relation to the social structure in which they live must be differentiated. Bates (1956) defines social position as "a location in a social structure which is associated with a set

of social norms” (p. 314), while a role is a part of a social position that carries a socially expected behavior pattern governed by a sub-set of social norms. Bates further notes that the nature of a role is “normative” and “structural” rather than behavioral; a role defines the expected functions, performed according to the sub-set of norms governing the role, of a person within a given position and is not an “expression of the position in action” (p. 314).

Role shock and role strain are essentially synonymous, except that role shock refers to the initial onset of the symptoms of role strain. The symptoms of someone experiencing role shock are often very similar to those of culture shock (Juarez, 1972; King, 1981), with the notable differences that the symptoms of role shock are generally more severe, get worse with time, seldom disappear (Byrnes, 1966), and instead of resulting from a lack of understanding of the configurations of local values or behaviors, are precipitated by an inability to fulfill or a conflict among role obligations (Goode, 1960; King, 1981).

Role shock is experienced when an individual first realizes that his or her pre-conceptions of the ideal role in working abroad fail to represent the actual situation (Byrnes, 1966; King, 1981). “Role shock evolves as a cumulative set of frustrations and escalating stresses. It occurs when an individual accepts a status with a feeling of assurance that he or she can provide appropriate role behaviors...” only to discover that they are unable to do so (King, 1981, p. 57). Primary sources of the onset of role shock include ambiguity of the professional role, difficulty negotiating relations with counterparts, involvement with host country bureaucracy and interaction with

administrators, the complex and often ambiguous demands of development work, and the degree of diversity of colleagues (Byrnes, 1966). If problems in these areas persist, role shock becomes role strain.

Role strain is the result of the conflict among the person filling a role, the role expectations, and societal norms governing the role (Wolfe & Snoek, 1962). Behavior in a given role is determined by a combination of an individual's personal attributes such as upbringing, values, training, needs, etc. and external factors such the role norms and demands from others. Often, the personal attributes of an individual will be incompatible with external demands, the external demands may be ambiguous, or the individual may not have an adequate or accurate understanding of the norms governing the position or role that is occupied. Situations such as these cause an extreme amount of stress in the individual, initially affecting performance within one role, and eventually affecting may other areas of the individual's life (Getzels & Guba, 1954; Wolfe & Snoek, 1962). Generally, an individual experiences role strain from four primary sources: insecurity about the ability to meet the performance demands of a role, uncertainty about what the expectations are for a role, conflicts among the demands of various roles, and conflicts in fulfilling the demands of the various social status positions held (Goode, 1960).

For example, 'Peace Corps Volunteer' can be thought of as a social position within the social structure of the host country community. This social position carries with it multiple roles: learner, change agent, facilitator, trainer, planner, and mentor (*Roles of the Volunteer in Development*, 2002). The PCV will already have cultural norms that govern the responsibilities and appropriate behavior in the context of fulfilling these

roles from experience and PST. Once posted to site, the PCV will likely confront role shock as host country norms governing these roles are received. If these norms are not homogeneous and the expectations for fulfilling these roles are vastly different among the personal, institutional, and cultural aspects, then role conflict occurs, eventually progressing into role strain.

Summary of the Literature

Factors that affect job performance both domestically and in a cross-cultural environment have been identified in numerous volumes of literature and in many empirical studies. Even though the experiences of each PCV in the RAP project are largely unique and are often widely variable, there are concerns pertaining to job performance that are common. Each PCV must contend with barriers to performing effectively as a change agent and the primary barriers to effective job performance can be either institutional or environmental and are related to PCV preparation during pre-service training, as well as the psychological effects of cultural shock and role shock/strain.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Methodology

The methods used in a research study are simply a means to an end, but the researcher can become so occupied with methodology that the goal of any research study, which is to produce findings, is lost. However, the findings of a research project are only relevant if the methodology used to obtain them is sound, and establishing sound methodology requires consideration of the nature of the study. The qualitative researcher often begins with a question: what do I want to know in this study (Janesick, 2001)? The researcher answered this question by stating the purpose of the study, which was to identify factors that inhibit or facilitate the ability of PCVs to contribute promptly and effectively to projects in aquaculture in Zambia, once posted to their sites. Upon establishing a purpose for the study, the researcher then decided upon the methodology that was most appropriate for accomplishing this purpose.

The qualitative researcher uses whatever methods, strategies, or empirical materials are available, and if new techniques or tools must be invented or pieced together, then the researcher will do this (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 4). Because personal interviews are currently regarded as integral in qualitative research, it is necessary to explain their absence from this study. The researcher interviewed participants using a web-based survey instrument, rather than conducting 'face-to-face', or personal interviews. It is acknowledged that an obvious objection to this approach would be that the non-verbal

behavior cues acquired by the interviewer about the interviewee are lost, as is cuing from personal factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, and class. This is a legitimate criticism of electronic interviews and surveys, but study participants were located from Alaska to Egypt and personal interviews, and in most cases telephone interviews, were impractical or impossible. Given this constraint, the researcher was able to adapt an electronic survey method for interviewing that was appropriate for qualitative research and sufficient for achieving the purpose of this study.

The following methodology was used to accomplish the purpose of the study.

Data Collection

Sampling Procedures

The survey participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). In the naturalistic research paradigm, purposive sampling is preferable to random sampling, as purposive sampling “increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms” (Erlandson, et al 1993. p. 82). In addition, the researcher’s primary concern when conducting naturalistic inquiry is not generalization of the results of the study, but rather to identify problems or patterns within the context being studied (Erlandson, et al, 1993).

The sample for the study consisted of seventeen RPCVs who had served in Zambia in the aquaculture assignment area between 1997 and 2002 (see Table 1). The criteria for

selecting participants were: 1) Classified as a RPCV, 2) served in Zambia, and 3) primary assignment area was aquaculture.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Who Served in Aquaculture Projects in Zambia between 1997 and 2002 (N=17)

Respondent Code	Gender	Academic Background
I1	M	Fish and Wildlife Management
I2	F	Liberal Arts
I3	F	Marine Biology
I4	M	Biology
I5	F	Behavioral Biology
I6	F	Marine Biology
I7	F	Biology
I8	M	Biochemistry
I9	M	Fisheries Science
I10	F	Environmental Studies
I11	M	Marine Biology
I12	F	Wildlife and Fisheries Science
I13	M	Biochemistry
I14	F	No Degree
I15	F	Information Not Provided
I16	F	Fisheries Science
I17	M	Fisheries Science

Because the RPCVs were located throughout the United States, it was determined that e-mail and telephone contacts were the most efficient and effective methods of communication. Because a Peace Corps policy prohibits the agency from releasing the names of RPCVs, the current RAP project director in Zambia and a Peace Corps Zambia country desk officer in Washington, D.C. forwarded via e-mail the researcher's request for study participants to RPCVs who fit the study criteria for participants. RPCVs interested in participating in the study subsequently contacted the researcher directly via e-mail, and the researcher replied via e-mail acknowledging their willingness to participate.

Documents

The researcher chose to use documents as an additional data source because, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), documents provide stability of information, contextual relevance, richness of information, natural language of the setting, and are non-reactive. The Peace Corps Aquaculture Technical Training Manual and the Peace Corps Zambia Cultural Training Manual were obtained by submitting a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Peace Corps requesting all training materials used in the training of PCTs for the RAP project in Zambia. A copy of the FOIA request submitted by the researcher and the Peace Corps' response is in Appendix A. In addition, personal journals kept by two RPCVs who served in Zambia in the RAP project were accessed on-line.

Instrumentation

Based on the review of the literature, the researcher created a qualitative survey instrument with open-ended questions to determine what factors contributed to or inhibited the effectiveness of PCVs. The survey was accessible via the Internet only. A sample of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Quality Criteria

It is often asserted that qualitative research lacks rigor, that qualitative studies are undisciplined, and that the qualitative researcher merely makes subjective observations. Regardless of the truthfulness of these charges, it has become incumbent on the qualitative researcher to use the many tools and techniques available to make certain that the findings of a qualitative study are meaningful and warrant attention; or, the qualitative researcher must establish the trustworthiness of the study by ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

The researcher established credibility in this qualitative study in three ways: 1) through the activities of prolonged engagement and triangulation, the researcher increased the likelihood that credible findings were produced and credible interpretations were made from these findings, 2) an external check on the research process through peer debriefing was performed by the chair of the researcher's graduate advisory

committee, and 3) the findings and interpretations of data obtained from human subjects were tested by the use of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Erlandson et al. (1993) asserted that prolonged engagement provides a foundation for credibility by “enabling the researcher to learn the culture of an organization or other social setting over an extended time period that tempers distortions...” (p. 132). The amount of time that constitutes sufficient prolonged engagement is highly variable, but enough time must be spent in the setting that is being studied so that the researcher is able to gain an understanding of the context in which the study takes place. The researcher lived with a RAP project PCV for four days, interacting with numerous PCV’s and observing the settings in which they worked. Additionally, the researcher also spent five days at the Peace Corps Zambia main office in Lusaka, intermingling with Peace Corps staff and PCVs.

The researcher used triangulation in the collection of the data to add credibility to the study by “using different or multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theory” (Erlandson et al., p. 137). Multiple data sources were used, such as RPCV interviews, Peace Corps documents, RPCV journals, the researcher’s observations, and RPCV photographs. The researcher also collected thick description on the environment in which PCVs in Zambia operate. In addition, theoretical triangulation was achieved as perspectives from the literature corroborated the findings of the study.

Peer debriefing was performed periodically throughout the study with the researcher’s thesis committee chair. The purpose of these debriefing sessions was to “build credibility by allowing a peer who is a professional outside the context and who

has some general understanding of the study to analyze materials, test working hypothesis and emerging designs, and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns" (Erlandson, et al., p. 140). During the peer-debriefing sessions, various aspects of the study were examined and discussed, such as research design, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, in addition to other general concerns and issues of the study. Peer debriefing is outlined in Appendix C.

Another important method for establishing credibility in a qualitative study is member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While there are many ways to approach member checking, the researcher chose to provide respondents with copies of their survey responses so that "errors of fact" and "challenges to interpretations" could be made (p. 142). Also, the researcher submitted a memo outlining conclusions and findings to the RAP project director in Zambia in order to allow "stake holding groups to test categories, interpretations, and conclusions" of the study (Erlandson et al., p. 142).

Transferability

Transferability in a qualitative study addresses the applicability of the findings within a certain context, rather than their generalization across an entire population. For example, the findings from this study may not necessarily be generalized to all Peace Corps Volunteers, but are applicable to Peace Corps Volunteers in the context of the RAP project in Zambia. This does not mean that the findings of this study, or any qualitative study in general, will not have relevance across contexts. The qualitative researcher uses purposive sampling and thick description to achieve a measure of

transferability across contexts of the knowledge gained from a qualitative research study. Purposive sampling is meant to maximize the range of information that can be obtained within a certain context. Purposive sampling serves as a foundation for thick description. Using thick description, the researcher collects sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability (Erlandson et al., p 33). Thick description is meant to draw the reader vicariously into the context, and the researcher must ensure that the description is detailed enough to accomplish this while at the same time eliminating irrelevant description. Using thick description supported by purposive sampling, the researcher makes it possible for judgments about application of findings to be made by the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

The dependability of a qualitative study addresses the question of consistency: if this study were replicated using similar methods in a similar context, would the findings be repeated? To establish dependability, the researcher must make it possible for someone outside of the study to check the processes used to conduct the study, usually in the form of an audit trail (Erlandson et al., 1993). For this study, the researcher kept a weekly log, or a reflexive journal, of the progression of the research process, including such details as “schedule and logistics, insights, and reasons for methodological decisions” (p. 143).

Confirmability

The findings of a research study should be the product of the researcher's inquiry and not of the researcher's biases. While it is impossible for the researcher to achieve complete objectivity, confirmability assures the reader that "constructions, assertions, facts and so on can be tracked to their sources, and the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319). For this purpose, an audit trail was constructed from this study that links survey responses used in the study to the corresponding respondent. The audit trail can be found in Appendix D. Additionally, materials such as the raw data collected on interview forms, data reduction and analysis products, process notes, and a reflexive journal have been retained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Procedures

Data were gathered from August 2003 through October 2003. An electronic survey instrument that was accessible only via the Internet was used to obtain responses from the population of RPCVs. To locate respondents who fit the study criteria, the researcher contacted a Zambia Country Desk at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. A Zambia Country Desk officer then contacted the director of the RAP project in Zambia who supplied the names of RPCVs. The Country Desk Officer then contacted via e-mail the RPCVs with instructions to contact the researcher via e-mail if interested in participating in the study. Because respondents were identified before the electronic survey was prepared, once contacted by an RPCV, the researcher replied with a message

explaining that the RPCV would be notified when the survey was available on-line. The survey instrument was distributed on-line in July 2003 via the website <http://rpcvsurvey.webhop.org>. The researcher subsequently sent an e-mail notification to the RPCVs that contained a link to the survey instrument and explained the purpose of the study and its importance to the Peace Corps. A copy of this e-mail can be found in Appendix E. By September of 2003, the researcher had received seventeen valid responses.

In addition to electronic surveys, the researcher used document analysis to collect data for the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative study is a continuous process, rather than an event that occurs at a specific stage of the research process. In naturalistic inquiry, data analysis is closely tied to data collection. The researcher simultaneously analyzes data on-site as it is being collected, with a second analysis occurring after the data is collected and the researcher is away from the collection site. Because the researcher used an electronic survey instrument to collect data, the first aspect of data analysis was not available.

The researcher utilized the constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to analyze the data. First, the researcher unitized the data using a color-coding system. Each unit of data consisted of a single piece of information that could be understood independently. Next, the units of data were sorted into categories and

emerging themes were recognized. Once themes began to emerge, the researcher finalized the construct; some categories were merged or eliminated.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Context

PCVs serving in Africa work on the toughest assignments under the most arduous conditions in one of the most difficult places to live on the planet. Because of the especially grueling conditions within Zambia, assignment to the RAP project greatly increases the inherent difficulty level that comes with all Peace Corps assignments in Africa. In 2003, the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI) rank for Zambia was 163 out of 173 countries. A country's HDI rank is based on a set of indexes that measure certain aspects of internal development, such as the Human Development Index, the Human Poverty Index, and the Gender Development Index, among many others. The purpose of the index is to "[go] beyond income to assess the level of people's long-term well-being" (United Nations Human Development Report, para. 1, 2003); to place Zambia's position of 163rd into context, the United States placed 7th, China 104th, and the Sudan 138th.

In 1997, the Peace Corps introduced inland aquaculture to Zambia as part of its overall national development initiative. Aquaculture can be thought of as fish farming, or the process of raising and harvesting fish. In Zambia, the freshwater species of fish called tilapia is used and, for ecological reasons, the ponds in which the fish are raised are isolated from natural bodies of water such as streams or ponds (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Fishpond, Zambia, 2001

The practice of inland aquaculture was not entirely new to Zambia, as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Africare, and the Norwegian Development Agency each had made major attempts at the diffusion of aquaculture practices, but these attempts largely failed to achieve sustainability. Why did the Peace Corps expect to succeed where so many others had failed? The Peace Corps' aquaculture initiative focused on using highly skilled Volunteers to train small-scale farmers at the village level and from the first day of project conception, sustainability was touted as an essential goal.

While aquaculture in general was not new to Zambia, it was certainly not new to the Peace Corps either, as the agency had accumulated over thirty years of knowledge regarding the implementation and management of aquaculture projects in more than

twenty countries spanning three continents, with much of this experience coming from aquaculture projects on the African continent. Armed with this impressive collection of institutional profundity, the RAP project was started in 1997 with a core group of six Volunteers transferred from aquaculture projects in other African countries who were supplemented by 18 new Volunteers.

It is a common misconception that PCVs work for the Peace Corps when, in actuality, PCVs are assigned to a host organization within the host country. Specifically, RAP project Volunteers are assigned to the Zambian government's Fisheries Sub-Program. Generally, Volunteers are responsible to both the Zambian government and the Peace Corps, reporting to the Zambian District Fisheries agents, Regional Fisheries officials, the regional Peace Corps Volunteer Leader, and the Associate Peace Corps Director. The Peace Corps' roles include assigning technically competent PCVs to villages that meet topographical, volunteer support, and safety standards, while paying salaries, providing medical care, coordinating activities with the host organization, and monitoring the progress of the project.

The Peace Corps' fundamental approach to aquaculture is centered on the exchange of information between PCVs and the intended beneficiaries of the RAP project, the rural farmers. Achieving sustainability with the RAP project is based essentially upon the consistency and longevity of this information exchange. PCVs are instructed in very specific technical procedures during PST concerning all aspects of fish farming in order to ensure that they are equipped to diffuse a standardized technical curriculum to project beneficiaries. In addition, each site hosts at least three generations of PCVs, meaning

that standardized guidance and instruction takes place ideally for a minimum of six years. This approach is meant to ensure the successful diffusion of aquaculture techniques, resulting in farmer independence and project sustainability. It is envisioned that "...if the farmers are taught to be zealous of the standards at the same time as understanding their value, an instructive and productive technique will have been implanted in the villages –one that will be durable" (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002, p. 350).

There seems to be a pervasive stereotype about the typical living conditions of a PCV in Africa. The first ingredient in the stereotypical stew is the ubiquitous mud hut, which is located in a village that is, of course, remote. To this archetypal concoction is added a dash of electricity and a pinch of indoor plumbing that exist only in psychotic, Lariam-induced dreams. Top it off with a bizarre culture replete with odd customs, perplexing languages, and prolific, science fiction-like parasites that even a LSD-inspired Stephen King could not envisage, and you will have the mental image that is thrust into the brain of the typical American upon hearing the words 'Peace Corps' and 'Africa.' Although a bit fantastic, this depiction is not altogether unrepresentative of reality. In September of 2001, the researcher had the opportunity to test this stereotype by experiencing a snapshot of the daily life of a PCV and observing the fundamental procedures involved in the diffusion process. The researcher traveled to Zambia as a Peace Corps Trainee and the following village experience was the initial site visit before the commencement of PST. While the researcher returned to the United States due to the

September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City, this experience in Zambia served as the catalyst for this research project.

A site visit is where a Volunteer hosts a group of PCTs at his or her site. My site visit took place in the Northern Province of Zambia in a village outside of the town of Mpika, and my group of four PCTs stayed with a Volunteer who had been at this site for about one year. Zambia is a large country (about the size of the state of Texas) and it took about twelve hours to travel the 870 kilometers separating Lusaka and Mpika. We were fortunate to travel in a private vehicle furnished by the Peace Corps. I was informed that this trip could easily span days on the unreliable public transport. This initial foray demonstrated that traveling in Zambia is an arduous and time-consuming undertaking. PCVs in Zambia are furnished bicycles, but the distances traveled eventually require the recruitment of motorized transport. In Zambia, it takes a great deal of time, energy, and patience for PCVs to go anywhere.

For this site visit, we were not staying in Mpika, but in a village about ten kilometers beyond the town's outskirts. Through nature programs on television and my occasional browsing of National Geographic magazine, I had a vivid pre-conceived mental image of how this village would appear. My imaginings did not exactly match reality. The terrain was not a flat, sweeping savannah comprised of fertile soil covered with lush, waist high grass gently swaying in a soft breeze, but rather an undulating, hilly landscape littered with scraggly trees and dry, brittle grass (See Figure 2). From the Volunteer's hut I could see not see the dwellings of any other villagers, only the occasional column of smoke that assured me that we were, in fact, not alone. Dotted

along the hillsides, ridgelines, and valleys of the not-quite mountainous terrain were cleared fields with the remains of last season's crops. This area had suffered from drought for years, something of which rows of desiccated and broken corn stalks were evidence.



Figure 2. Landscape around Mpika, Zambia, 2001

Upon arrival at the widely dispersed hodgepodge of mud huts, I immediately noticed the pungent smell of wood smoke and the eerie absence of familiar sounds. In a matter of minutes, I, along with all of my possessions, was covered with a layer of red dust that seemed to seep into the pores of my skin. Vanished was the soothing, almost

subliminal symphony of Western “progress;” but my awareness of quiescence was not as disconcerting as the eventual realization that the knowledge and life skills I had acquired over a quarter century of living in the United States were largely useless in this environment. I could not communicate effectively, if at all, with the local residents; I was unsure how to get food and water; using the latrine was an obstacle; bathing was not even a consideration; and, perhaps most frustrating, every time I entered a dwelling my hands would involuntarily search for a light switch that was not there (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Typical Peace Corps Volunteer hut, Zambia, 2001

An anemic rooster (that I would quickly grow to loathe) typically provided reveille at three-thirty a.m. I never did manage a restful night of sleep, compliments of the combination of constant hunger pangs, a disconcerting nocturnal silence periodically

punctuated by unidentifiable noises, and the rock hard ground. The PCV did not suffer from any of these problems (see Figure 4). As I was not particularly enamored with village cuisine, I did not eat as much as I could have while the PCV consumed everything he could place his hands on (a trait he assured me I would need to develop in order to survive). In addition, the PCV was accustomed to the bush noises, and, of course, slept in a bed instead of in a sleeping bag on the ground.



Figure 4. PCV living “complex,” with bathhouse on left, pit latrine center, and hut on right, Zambia, 2001

Children in the village proved to be a constant fixture and evoked an emotional paradox; although I felt pleasure watching them play and laugh, I was also overcome with sorrow at their lack of ability to determine their futures. Two images are most vivid in my mind. The first is of two young Zambian boys, who were perhaps seven or eight, kicking a makeshift ball around. This ball was nothing more than a collection of paper

and plastic bags crumpled together and wrapped with twine; but I marveled at their resourcefulness and contentment. The other permanently transfixed and decidedly more disturbing image I retained from this experience is of a Zambian girl, probably four years old, digging through the PCV's trash pit. I saw this little girl several times during my stay in the village, and I was struck by how serious she seemed to be, a scowl constantly affixed to her face. Was it the presence of the strange white visitors that soured her mood, or had she, at such a young age, comprehended the hopelessness of the situation into which she was born?

During my stay, I was able to experience what a typical day of visiting fish farmers was like. I never met the farmer who had constructed the first pond we visited, but because it was visible from the PCV's hut, I was told it was maintained very vigilantly. Regardless, it had been overfilled the night before. The drain outlet was not properly constructed, and the PCV ended up stopping the flow of water into the pond by stuffing mud and grass into the inlet pipe. We were only five minutes into our trek, and the PCV was already wet and muddy. Fish farming certainly is a dirty job. Because Zambians pride themselves in a neat, clean appearance, PCVs must constantly try to maintain an appropriate external appearance while performing a job that makes this nearly impossible.

While walking to the next pond, we were greeted by an ancient looking Zambian woman who was hailing us from at least twenty-five yards away (see Figure 5). I was again reminded that I was completely incapable of even the most basic actions in this strange place; I had no idea how to properly interact with this woman. Even if she had

been able speak English, or I Bemba, I did not know the proper greetings, hand gestures, body language, etc. This meeting prompted me to reflect on the role of women in this rural agricultural society. I was forming the impression that the Bemba women, just as in many agrarian societies in sub-Saharan Africa, provided the bulk of the manual labor and were the proverbial glue that held their households together. I saw men clearing fields for planting, but women seemed to do everything else, from household management tasks such as taking care the children, cooking, and gathering water, to planting and harvesting crops. Paradoxically, despite the indispensable societal position Bemba women occupied, the female PCTs in the group were cautioned that their effectiveness as PCVs would be hampered, at least initially, because of their gender.

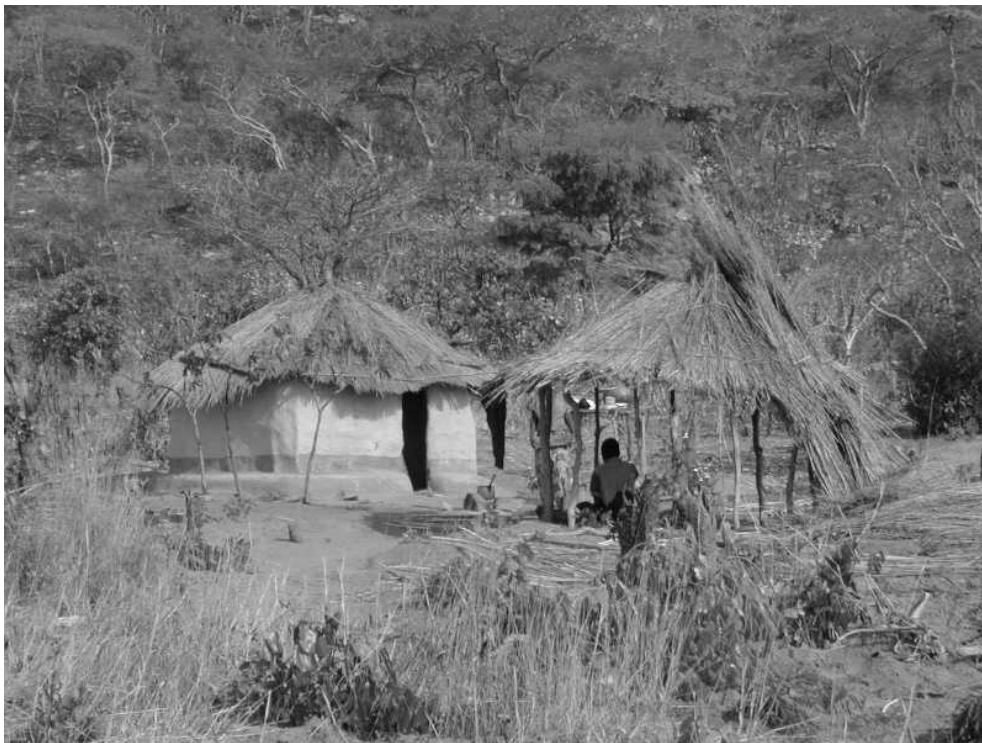


Figure 5. Zambian family compound, Zambia, 2001

Later that afternoon, we visited a pond under construction and, once again, I had to try to avoid personal embarrassment and offending the farmer as another round of introductions was conducted. I soon learned that this farmer had constructed a pond previously that had a dike (bank) burst while the pond was being filled. In that first attempt, the farmer had not properly compressed the soil in the dikes, and the PCV informed me that he was making the same mistake in the construction of his current pond. I watched, increasingly frustrated, as the PCV tried unsuccessfully, using broken Bemba and hand gestures that looked like a dreadful pantomime routine, to explain the concept of compacting the earth in the dike. The problem was not the farmer's inability to understand the utility or concept of tamping dirt, but instead the PCVs incapability to communicate the idea effectively. The PCV and farmer eventually parted without reaching an understanding, and I remember thinking that heterophily between the change agent and beneficiary was much like the clairvoyant power of the two-faced god Janus: it has the potential to be as much of a hindrance as a benefit.

This particular farmer seemed to be reluctant a fish farmer and when I questioned the PCV regarding this observation, I was informed that many villagers would attempt a fishpond because it was a novelty. Further, often the residents in the village would not have a clear understanding of why a PCV was coming. A PCV was always welcome in a village; the PCV was a good source of income for the local residents because labor would be purchased, such as clothes washing, cooking, water and firewood gathering and carpentry projects. In these instances, the PCV was viewed more as a bank than a change agent.

Volunteers serving in the RAP project must contend with the standard difficulties, problems, and hardships typically encountered by PCVs serving in the role of rural extension agents, but also have the added encumbrance of performing these duties in spite of extremely demanding physical conditions and the presence of an overwhelming cultural divide. The preparation that Volunteers receive before site posting and their ability to utilize this training as rural extension agents is paramount to the success of the RAP project.

Research Question One

What types of assignment-specific technical, language, and cultural training did the PCVs receive prior to site placement?

The Peace Corps' Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2000 through 2005 asserts that in order for the agency to achieve its mission, it is dedicated to providing "the technical, language, and cross-cultural training that Volunteers require to be successful in their assignments." Further, it states that such training is essential to volunteer success and is designed to "ensure that volunteers can accomplish their assignment goals..." (*The Peace Corps Strategic Plan*, 2000, p. 5). Because of the high degree of heterophily that routinely exists between Peace Corps Volunteers and the intended beneficiaries of Peace Corps projects, it is necessary for PCVs to attend a comprehensive pre-service training (PST) program to ensure that they are adequately prepared to function as extension agents in rural Zambia.

Peace Corps PST programs typically include both agency-wide training goals and country and assignment-specific training goals. The agency-wide goals address broad, very general programming outcomes that all Peace Corps PST programs should achieve, such as insuring PCVs are equipped to perform the duties associated with their assignments. In alignment with these agency-wide preparation goals, each country develops a curriculum of instruction and institutes a training program design in order to prepare Volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to perform in a specific assignment area. The RAP project PST is staffed almost entirely by Zambians and is divided into technical, behavioral, and language/cultural objectives and, although each objective has a separate curriculum, they are integrated during training exercises to the greatest extent possible.

Specifically, RAP project volunteers receive technical instruction in the theory and practice of agricultural extension, the biology and care of the various fish species used in the RAP project, pond site selection, design, management, construction and renovation, and the organization and operational details and standards of the RAP project. In addition, volunteers are trained in language and cross-cultural skills, and are assessed by the training staff throughout PST for demonstrated competence in the behavioral areas of motivation, productive competence, and adaptability/social sensitivity. Upon completion of the three-month PST program and before swearing in as Peace Corps Volunteers and being posted to a site, PCTs must demonstrate to the training staff a satisfactory level of language and technical proficiency. While the life of a Volunteer in the village can be varied and unpredictable, the daily activities during pre-service training are structured

and consistent. A typical day involves four hours of formal language instruction and four hours of technical instruction with classes on culture, safety and health issues, and HIV/AIDS prevention, among others, conducted routinely.

The RAP project PST program, conducted in an urban setting in the town of Mwekera, Zambia, is envisioned as the first stage in a continuous learning process. While volunteers learn vital technical, language, and cross-cultural skills during PST that are identified by the training staff as the most critical during the first six months on site, it is envisioned that PCVs will hone and supplement these skills while engaged in daily extension activities and that more specific technical skills will be developed at other training opportunities such as In-Service Training events and site visits from Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders and Zambian Department of Fisheries agents (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002). Despite the expectation that volunteers will continue the learning process after entering the work environment, the knowledge and skills imparted during the pre-service training program comprise an essential knowledge base that a combination of further formal training and practical experience will augment. To this end, the pre-service training program's design incorporates identical elements, general principles, and stimulus variability in order to maximize the likelihood that learned knowledge and skills are transferred to the work environment.

The training program incorporates identical elements to a great extent; the trainees' "learning activities and living arrangements mimic, as closely as possible, the reality of what PCVs encounter in the field (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002, p. 2). A unique feature of the training program is the home stay. During pre-service training,

PCTs live in the home of a Zambian family enabling the continuous improvement of language skills and cross-cultural adaptability. In addition to basing various learning activities in the local community and emphasizing trainee interaction with locals, the home stay aids in simulating the village living environment to some degree and trainees are given the opportunity to “develop important cultural communication skills before [going] to post” (p. 2). Respondents commented on the efficacy of the home stays (I5, I10, I12, I14) describing them as “very effective” (I10), a “great experience” (I12) and “the best part of training” (I14).

During PST, the trainees make three visits to a PCV’s site where the trainees are able to, “... see how the Volunteer interacted with the Zambians, the living conditions, the language skills required, the day to day routine” (I7). Site visits are another attempt to integrate identical elements into the training design and give the trainees the opportunity to experience first-hand what the daily life of a RAP project PCV entails in addition to practicing acquired language skills in a village setting and interacting with rural Zambians. The respondents who commented on the site visits thought they were extremely beneficial (I2, I7, I12, I14), with one remarking, “the site visits were great [for] preparing us for village life, the more of these that can be incorporated, the better” (I12).

Identical elements are especially crucial for facilitating skill acquisition and development in language training. Trainees are instructed in one of four languages: Bemba, Lunda, Kaonde, or Nyanja. Although PCTs spend a minimum of four hours per day in formal language instruction building vocabulary, learning grammar, syntax, and

generally improving verbal communication ability, the home stay, local community interaction, and the site visits serve as empirical learning experiences that complement formal language instruction received in the classroom in addition to indicating the level of language proficiency achieved by the trainee.

In addition to identical elements, careful attention is taken to instruct the trainees in the general principles that form the foundation of the technical tasks they will be required to perform once posted to site. The technical component of training is divided into seven areas: 1) extension, 2) species identification, anatomy, and physiology, 3) site selection and pond construction, 4) pond management, 5) integrated aquaculture and agriculture, 6) appropriate technology, and 7) the Rural Aquaculture Promotion project. The objectives of the technical component of the curriculum “correspond to skills ... [needed] in the field, and they form the basis of the overall technical training program” (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002, p. 12). Generally, the respondents had complementary educational backgrounds (I1, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13, I15, I16, I17) that facilitated technical training and the respondents who specifically commented on the technical component of PST gave it high marks overall (I1, I2, I3, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13, I17).

The RAP Technical Training Manual (2002) emphasizes the unpredictable and diverse nature of serving as an extension agent in the RAP project. To lessen the potentially negative effects of this intrinsic unpredictability in the Volunteers’ everyday experiences, stimulus variability is incorporated as part of the training program design. The training staff strives to impress upon trainees that “every farmer, every village,

every site, and every volunteer is a little different” and that within Zambia there are “amazing differences in climate, culture, and language” (*RAP Technical Training Handbook*, 2002, p. 14). This variability has implications for the effectiveness of training, as it is impossible to prepare PCTs for every possible problem or situation that may be encountered in the field. As one RPCV noted, “You can only train in generalities and there will always be exceptions and times when you have to innovate and be creative” (I1), which was a sentiment echoed by other respondents (I6, I14).

Research Question Two

How effective was the pre-service training program in facilitating the transfer of learned technical, language, and cultural knowledge and skills to the work environment?

The previous research question identified various aspects of the pre-service training program that all RAP project Volunteers must satisfactorily complete before being posted to a site and beginning work as an extension agent. Research question two was examined to measure the degree to which these Volunteers perceived that they were prepared to transfer technical, language, and cross-cultural training to the work environment. The self-efficacy and motivation of the trainees, in addition to the environments of the training program and the work site, are key areas identified in the literature that can impact the trainees’ ability to transfer learned knowledge and skills to the workplace successfully.

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's confidence in his or her capacity to perform successfully in the workplace utilizing the knowledge and skills gained from the training program (Axtell & Maitlis, 1997). Thirteen of the 17 respondents thought that the PST program was effective overall in preparing them for their assignment in the RAP project (I1, I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I12, I13, I16, I17), asserting that "the training was very good" (I16), "pre-service training was very effective" (I17) and "I think the training staff did a fine job and I felt well prepared" (I1). Moreover, over half of the Volunteers recognized the necessity of PST and were aware of the relevancy of the training curriculum to their responsibilities as RAP project Volunteers (I1, I3, I4, I5, I9, I10, I12, I13, I14, I17). "I did not enjoy pre-service training, but I understood its importance" (I17). This suggests that self-efficacy should not have been a factor that significantly affected the transfer of training, but any self-confidence that the Volunteers garnered by the feeling that they were generally well prepared was diminished by the recognition that glaring deficiencies existed in significant areas of their preparation.

A noteworthy opinion articulated by one respondent was that the PST program "was effective as anything could have been" (I14) and a surprising number of Volunteers concurred with this sentiment (I1, I3, I6, I8, I9, I12, I14). This is significant because it implies that upon completion of the PST program many of the respondents did not feel wholly confident in various aspects of their technical, language, and cross-cultural abilities. An opinion shared by a handful of respondents was that there were aspects of Peace Corps service, specifically the rudiments of living in a village, that training did not and could not have prepared them for (I2, I5, I12, I14). Basically, they thought

experience in the field was the only way to learn much of what is required to function as a Volunteer, signifying that the outcome expectancies related to an important aspect of succeeding as a Volunteer were either indefinite or non-existent. While a learning curve is certain to exist after Volunteers are posted to their sites, any activities undertaken during the PST program specifically to alleviate concerns about the impending unknowns of village life, in addition to other aspects of Peace Corps service, will significantly enhance the initial effectiveness of the Volunteers. Further compromising the feeling of self-efficacy were the doubts and concerns expressed by 14 of the 17 respondents about various aspects of their technical, language, and cross-cultural abilities after completing pre-service training (D1, D2, I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I11, I12, I14, I16).

The technical component of pre-service training generally garnered high praise (I1, I3, I4, I5, I8, I11, I12, I13, I17). “Technical training was excellent,” exhorted one respondent (I11), while others characterized the technical classes as “invaluable” (I17), “straightforward” (I8), and “thorough” (I1). Some respondents, however, were not as confident in their technical skills when they were posted to site (I2, I6, I7). “I had absolutely no prior knowledge about fish or fish farming before I reached Zambia. Although I didn’t feel completely confident about my fish knowledge upon completion of pre-service training, I soon recognized that I had been given sufficient knowledge and that true confidence and ability comes from experience in the field and even those with significant prior knowledge would agree with this statement” (I2). Eventually, this Volunteer stated that they “were very successful with fish farming in [their] village,” but

this early doubt in technical ability severely inhibited initial productivity and, in another Volunteer, may have negatively impacted the entire term of service.

Another respondent, who had an educational background in fisheries and a significant amount of assignment-related professional experience, felt “frustrated” by the lack of depth provided by the technical curriculum and the fact that there was not a resource at the training center in Mwekera, whether a person or document, that could provide more in-depth information. “Technical training was sufficient for the level of extension work we were assigned to do [but when] complex questions arose (which they did) regarding fish health, population dynamics, pond ecology, etc., there was no way to get them answered.” The respondent continued, “I was always told I would not need to know these things once I got to the village; however, I believe it would have helped me to do my job better had I had all of my questions answered...” (I7). This type of situation can undermine trainee self-efficacy. The reality may have been that this trainee possessed the information needed to perform effectively as an extension agent, but what is most salient is the trainee’s self-perception of technical preparedness. If the trainee does not perceive himself or herself as possessing adequate technical knowledge, then self-efficacy will be sacrificed along with effectiveness.

Next, language ability was identified by slightly over three-quarters of the respondents as a significant deficiency upon completion of pre-service training and the primary barrier to their ability to make timely contributions to aquaculture projects (D1, D2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I14 I16). Considering that communication between the change agent and beneficiary is the essence of the diffusion process, this is a

significant finding. “Being more fluent in the language would have drastically helped because I could explain the project better” (I6). Another respondent plainly states, “The biggest factor [affecting job performance] for me was the language barrier” (I14).

Incredibly, two respondents were actually instructed in the wrong dialect, significantly complicating their ability to contribute promptly and effectively (I5, I6). One respondent achieved a high level of knowledge of a local language during PST, but was hampered in performing extension activities because the intended beneficiaries at the site spoke a different dialect. “I was pretty good at the local language and didn’t struggle much. The only problem was that I was posted in an area where the predominant language was something else” (I6). The other Volunteer that encountered this problem similarly stated that, “A bit of language training in the dialect for the area I was placed would have been helpful” (I5). Neither Volunteer found the language discrepancy insurmountable, but this oversight indicates a potential deficiency in the way the training program coordinates learned knowledge and skills with Volunteer site placement.

Despite the concerns expressed by a portion of respondents regarding language ability upon the completion of pre-service training, almost half of the respondents found the language training very effective (I1, I2, I9, I10, I13, I14, I15, I17). “I thought the language training was great. I became fluent...” (I2). Other respondents, who were not able to achieve fluency in such a short period, were, at the least, able to develop a foundation of basic language skills that could be perfected in the village. “My

experiences in the training course gave me understanding of fundamental aspects in language study/learning...” (I13).

The views regarding the efficacy of cross-cultural instruction were varied and the transferability of this part of pre-service training seemed minimal. While cross-cultural training sessions were generally described as “horrible” (I2), “not effective” (I11), “poorly done” (I12), and “a bit off the mark” (I3), some Volunteers lamented that, despite this obvious shortcoming in the PST program, culture was just something that had to be experienced to really learn (I2, I3, I7, I8, I11, I12). Statements such as, “When it comes down to it, you can’t teach someone that” (I12) and “I really think it is person specific how well you adapt to the new culture and learn how to deal with it” (I8) typified comments regarding the nature of learning cross-cultural skills. Despite this general conception of how the knowledge and skills needed for cross-cultural adaptation are best acquired, it was evident that insufficient training in this area contributed to the initial ineffectiveness of some of the respondents.

Two respondents reflected that the cultural information was too generalized to actually be of benefit. The cultural instructor for one respondent was from a country other than Zambia, and according to the respondent, “A man born and raised in West Africa does not know the heart and soul customs of Zambia any better than you or I.” The respondent continued, “We were presented with taboos or cultural traits, which applied to only a single tribe (or even a fraction of) and assumed that it was the same throughout the country. Many times I acted or spoke incorrectly at [site] based on these generalized customs which weren’t true where I lived.” This respondent concluded that

cross-cultural training should be “location/tribe specific” (I11). The other respondent stated, “Cross-cultural sessions were horrible. It was essentially conveying what the trainers wanted us to think about Zambia, rather than the reality” (I2). This demonstrates that situational identification based on deficient or incorrect training can clearly have a negative effect on a Volunteer’s ability to contribute initially to projects.

The literature has shown that trainees who are not able to maintain their motivation throughout the training program are much less likely to achieve a sense of self-efficacy upon its completion (Steers & Porter, 1975). The tedious and exhaustive training program schedule compounded the inherent difficulties involved in learning many new skills in a relatively brief period. Almost 30% of the respondents indicated that they began to lose interest in the curriculum (I2, I8, I12, I14, I17) and were subsequently unable to preserve the self-motivation that is so crucial to deriving maximum benefit from any training program. The reality that “training was very long and intense with not very many breaks away from class” (I14) was a lament among a handful of respondents (I3, I5, I6, I11, I12, I14). Once trainee enthusiasm and interest begins to wane, acquisition of knowledge begins to suffer and the ability to assimilate and synthesize information significantly diminishes (Steers & Porter, 1975). “[Pre-service training] is a short amount of time to cover everything that needs to be taught...” (I3). Another respondent confessed, “...after the second month of training I really wasn’t absorbing any more information” and “I think most people in my group were ready to be posted after 2 to 2-1/2 months of training” (I12).

One element of PST that seemed to have both a beneficial and detrimental effect on trainee motivation was the home stay. While respondents identified the home stay as a vital tool for learning the language and in facilitating cross-cultural adaptation, the home stays tended to increase the wearing effect of the PST program's intense schedule (I5, I11, I12, I17). "Living in someone else's home for those three months felt somewhat like imprisonment. [The trainees] were given very little free time, and that which we had was expected [to be] spent with the host family. The family I stayed with was very pleasant, but after 8-10 hours of classes, the last thing I wanted to do was return home and find language class beginning again" (I11). Another remarked that it was "...constrictive to stay with a home stay in that you didn't have a lot of free time" (I5).

Trainees have a certain amount of control over the extent to which self-efficacy and motivation impact the transfer of training, but they are bereft of the capability to control work environment factors such as whether the job offers the opportunity to transfer training, the level of supervisory support trainees receive when placed in the work environment, and factors such as the agency's stance on rewards systems, individual motivation, risk-taking, and innovation. It is a possibility that a Volunteer may, once posted to site, encounter an environment that is simply not conducive to the transfer of training. "The main factor that influenced the time [it took me to contribute] was the immediate lack of work" (I6). The environment at the site may simply delay the Volunteer's ability to begin contributing to RAP projects or it may indefinitely prevent any assignment contributions from being made. Many of the work environment factors

result from programming-related issues, specifically with the way the Peace Corps plans and implements programs and selects Volunteer sites.

For example, a respondent was placed at a site in an area where other development agencies had been attempting to introduce aquaculture with varying degrees of commitment for over a decade, and the respondent found that the reality was that as far as the villagers were concerned, “there was very little interest [in aquaculture]” (I7). The site was located very close to the Angola border and the prolonged intense fighting in the general area had continually defeated all previous development efforts by other agencies. This Volunteer was the third PCV at the site; the preceding two had been evacuated due to the civil unrest. Why, after a decade of failure of other development agencies, two failed previous attempts by Peace Corps Volunteers, and the presence of a civil war, was another Volunteer placed at this site? “The villagers were ‘over it’ when it came to fish farming, but it was just such a good area topographically and with the length of the rainy season that Peace Corps probably just didn’t want to give it up” (I7). Clearly, the work environment provided this Volunteer with very little chance of actually succeeding at this site.

The same respondent (I7) was quite adamant in stating that problems with Volunteer effectiveness, “[begin] in the planning stage that goes on before the Volunteer even arrives in country” and also indicated that despite established procedures for planning and implementing projects (*Peace Corps Programming Guide*, 2001), the RAP project administrators do not adequately involve the intended beneficiaries in the planning stage. While no other respondent specifically cited project programming as a

factor that affected job performance, many of the problems encountered by respondents were the result of deficiencies in this area (I3, I6, I7, I10, I12, I16).

Another work environment factor cited in the literature that can potentially impact the transfer of training is the amount of agency support that Volunteers receive once they enter the work environment after completing the training program (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986). Once posted to their sites, RAP project Volunteers are essentially left to fend for themselves and receive, at best, minimal support from either the Peace Corps or the Zambian DOF. Despite this, respondents did not specifically cite a lack of agency support in the field as something that posed a barrier to initial assignment contribution, although about one-half did opine that moving to the village was a difficult and trying transition (I1, I2, I3, I5, I7, I8, I12, I13, I14). The lack of agency support available to Volunteers in the field may be due to the agency culture that encourages innovation and individual initiative; however, the lack of monetary and material resources available to Volunteers renders this culture as a necessity, rather than complementary.

Closely associated with agency support for PCVs in the field is agency supervision of PCVs, and one usually does not exist without the other. Once the trainees are posted to site, there is routinely only minimal supervision to ensure that the new PCVs are performing job-related tasks (I3, I4, I10, I12, I16). This absence of supervision creates a situation where PCVs are acutely aware that they are not held accountable for transferring learned knowledge and skills to the work place. “No one is forcing the PCV to do anything, so they can just withdraw if they want to” (I4). One respondent actually separated RAP project PCVs into, “those that stay at post and work...” and “those that

are always on vacation and partying...” (I10). It is unreasonable for the Peace Corps to expect every Volunteer to perform project-related tasks at an acceptable level if there is no supervisory mechanism that ensures adherence to a minimal standard of performance.

Research Question Three

How did the psychological effects of culture shock and role shock affect the PCVs' ability to function effectively as a change agent immediately following site posting?

The cultural aspect was the most difficult as I think it is for every PCV trainee. I really think it is person specific how well you adapt to the new culture and learn how to deal with it. I had traveled fairly well before entering the Peace Corps, but nothing felt like the culture shock of Zambia. (I8)

Culture shock is a work-related element with which every international development agency must contend. The phenomenon of culture shock has been extensively studied and its effects have been documented in voluminous amounts of literature; yet, it is very easy to take its potentially debilitating effects for granted. The Peace Corps, probably more so than any other international development agency, can ill afford to treat culture shock casually. The caricature of the twenty-something recent college graduate isolated in a rural village following PST with little contact with anything familiar is not an inaccurate generalization nor is this situation uncommon. Volunteers serving in the RAP project, far from being exceptions to this stereotype of Volunteer isolation, are probably one of the primary reasons it exists and it is because of

the seclusion routinely faced by RAP project Volunteers that the effects of culture shock are especially poignant.

Thirteen of the seventeen respondents indicated that adjusting to village life was a factor that significantly affected the time it took to contribute to RAP-related projects (D2, I1, I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I13, I14, I16). “In the beginning, you are just spending time adjusting to the culture and feeling your way through it” (I12). Another respondent confided that, “I was very nervous about getting posted and I actually considered Early Termination soon after getting posted because of ‘loneliness issues’ ” (I2). This respondent also mentioned that “personal adjustment issues” primarily contributed to the amount of time it took to contribute to projects and continued, “Part of the process is to really adjust to the village first and get to know people and then start to have a significant contribution.” Another respondent, who was very confident in the technical, language, and cross-cultural skills acquired from PST professed, “More so than any other transition experience, the move from ‘town’ Zambia to ‘village’ Zambia was a difficult and trying one” (I13).

It was also evident that respondents experienced varying degrees of role shock after site posting. Sixteen of the 17 respondents identified the basic process of becoming familiar with the rural environment and the local villagers and, reciprocally, letting the villagers become familiar with them, as a significant part of the process of adjustment to village life (D1, D2, I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I13, I14, I16). Respondents mentioned that it was necessary to “take time to get comfortable with your surroundings” (I1), and “put the time in to get to know who [the Volunteer] is working

with” (I3). From the viewpoint of the beneficiaries, respondents reported that it “took time for the villagers to adjust to a new Volunteer” (I6) and that “becoming accepted by the village and no longer being seen as an outsider” (I7) was an important and time-consuming step in the process of adjustment and contribution.

If the Volunteer does not make an effort to become a member of the village community and integrate into the social system to the extent possible, then it is likely that role shock and role strain will begin to emerge. This results from the inability of the Volunteer to decipher his or her role in the new community, making it impossible to contribute to RAP-related projects effectively. “It is imperative that PCVs spend time with neighbors and workmates in order to establish relationships which will be the basis for the remainder of their experience” (I13). Also, “The sooner you can bond with the people the smoother everything from work to living in general will go” (I14). This act of bonding and social interaction helps define the roles of the Volunteer within the village community. One respondent explicitly stated, “Get with people and establish your work role” (I4), while another commented that it was important to “...establish personal and social boundaries early so rules for interactions with the villagers are defined” (I10). Only when the roles of the Volunteer have been established can Volunteers overcome role shock and role strain and begin to function effectively as extension agents (Byrnes, 1966).

Summary of Research Findings

Heterophily between the PCV and the RAP project beneficiaries is the overall factor affecting the job performance of PCVs. The goal of the pre-service training program is to reduce the degree of heterophily, enabling PCVs to function effectively as extension agents in an unfamiliar environment. While the PST program was found to be effective overall, there existed deficiencies in key areas such as language and cross-cultural training that affected negatively the PCVs' ability to contribute to assignment-related projects. Most Volunteers, once posted to site, were eventually able to overcome the obstacles that these deficiencies created, but initial effectiveness and, occasionally, overall effectiveness was reduced.

Because the survey instrument was open ended, the researcher gathered additional data that did not "fit" within the scope of the research questions, but was otherwise very insightful and potentially beneficial to the rural aquaculture extension efforts in Zambia. The following is a list of additional findings and statements by Volunteers that were too valuable to exclude.

- The best fish farmers were usually those who excelled in other agriculture-related projects, such as gardening or farming (I4).
- Perseverance and a sense of humor were cited most often as essential Volunteer traits (D1, I1, I2, I4, I6, I7, I10, I11, I15).
- It is vitally important that the beneficiaries perceive the Volunteer as dedicated and competent (I6).

- If you approach your role as a fish culture extension agent with the attitude that you have all the answers and the Zambians have none, you will fail (I12).
- If your personal satisfaction is based entirely on achieving grand results in fish farming, you will be unhappy as a RAP project PCV; generally, accomplishments are small and progress is slow (I1).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that inhibit or facilitate the ability of PCVs to contribute promptly and effectively to projects in aquaculture in Zambia, once posted to their sites. This study examined various aspects of the pre-service training program in which Volunteers participated in addition to the effects of working in a foreign environment and contending with strange customs and languages. The data collected were synthesized into the thesis in order to identify factors that inhibit or improve initial PCV efficacy. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made so that the initial effectiveness of Volunteers serving in the RAP project in Zambia can be improved.

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were examined:

1. What types of assignment-specific technical and cultural training did the PCVs receive prior to site placement?
2. How effective was the pre-service training program in facilitating the transfer of learned technical, language, and cultural knowledge and skills to the work environment?

3. How did the psychological effects of culture shock and role shock affect the PCV's ability to function effectively as a change agent?

Summary of the Literature

By conducting a review of the literature, the researcher identified areas that can potentially affect the job performance of PCVs. Specifically, the preparation of PCVs in the pre-service training program and the effects of culture shock and role shock/strain are the areas that were identified as affecting the job performance of PCVs. The effectiveness of the pre-service training program can be assessed by the level of success that the PCVs had in transferring learned knowledge and skills to the workplace. Characteristics of the training program that can affect transfer of training include training design factors, trainee characteristics, and work environment factors. Additionally, culture shock and role shock/strain are aspects of heterophily that can influence PCV performance.

Training design factors include the design elements of identical elements, general principles, and stimulus variability. These design factors are incorporated into the instructional paradigm known as experiential learning: encouraging the trainee to learn by engagement in practical training activities and reflection on the experience. For a training program to be most effective, the program should contain identical elements, or structuring the training environment to resemble the work environment to the greatest extent possible; trainees should also be instructed in general principles, or the underlying theories and rules supporting technical curriculum; last, trainees should be exposed to

multiple examples of the application of a learned concept or skill through the use of stimulus variability.

Next, the personal characteristics of the trainee can have an effect on the transferability of learned knowledge and skills and include self-efficacy, motivation, and ability. Self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to perform on the job. A trainee's motivation throughout the training program and ability can affect a trainee's sense of self-efficacy. Trainees who maintain motivation will be stimulated to assimilate and synthesis knowledge, which will improve the trainee's overall ability to assimilate knowledge and skills and recognize situations in the workplace where they can be applied.

Last, work environment factors are related to the job or the employer. Job-related factors include whether the opportunity to transfer learned knowledge and skills is present and the amount of supervisory support available once the trainee returns to the work environment. The work environment must offer the opportunity to transfer training and there must be supervisory support available for the successful transfer of training to take place. Employer-related factors include the presence of a rewards system and organizational culture. If the transfer of training garners a reward and the organization actively encourages individual initiative, innovation, and risk-taking, then transfer of training is more likely to take place.

Culture shock occurs when an individual is placed in an unfamiliar or foreign environment and results in a detrimental psychological reaction that can affect job performance. The "self-oriented" and "perceptual" dimensions of expatriate adjustment

contain key areas that PCVs must be able to succeed in if they are to overcome culture shock and subsequently make effective contributions to projects within their assignment area.

Like culture shock, role shock/strain is primarily caused by heterophily but the symptoms of role shock/strain are much more severe and become worse with time. Role shock/strain is precipitated by an individual's recognition that the preconceived ideas and notions about working abroad fail to coincide with the reality of the situation. The individual accepts a role expecting to be able to fulfill the obligations associated with that role and then discovers that they lack the ability to do so. The primary sources of role shock/strain are ambiguity of the professional role, involvement with host-country bureaucracy, interaction with in-country administrators, the complex and often-ambiguous demands of development work, and a high degree of diversity of colleagues. The detrimental psychological effects of both culture shock and role shock/strain can potentially have a negative effect on job performance.

Summary of Methodology

This study was conducted in 2003 using qualitative research methods and utilized elements of the naturalistic research paradigm such as data analysis techniques and trustworthiness criteria including triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, reflexive journaling, and an audit trail in order to improve the dependability, transferability, and credibility of the findings.

The target population for the study consisted of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who had served in Zambia in the Rural Aquaculture Promotion project between the years of 1997 and 2002. Purposive sampling was used to gather appropriate participants with the current RAP country director and the Peace Corps Zambia country desk officer in Washington, D.C. serving as gatekeepers. As a result, 17 RPCVs participated in the study. In addition, the researcher used as data sources the Peace Corps Aquaculture Technical Training Manual, the Peace Corps Zambia Cultural Training Manual, and the personal journals kept by two RAP project RPCVs that were accessed online.

Based on a review of the relevant literature, the researcher created a qualitative survey instrument, which was offered online only, to determine what factors contributed to the effectiveness of PCVs.

The researcher utilized the constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to analyze the data collected.

Research Conclusions

These research conclusions are based on the three research questions that focused the study. Each research question will be re-stated and followed by conclusions based on the research findings.

Research Question One

What types of assignment-specific technical and cultural training did the PCVs receive prior to site placement?

It was concluded that:

- The PST curriculum is generalized to the entire country, rather than specifically to the Volunteers' site locations. A partial exception to this was the language training, which was generalized to the region of the country to which the Volunteer would be assigned after completing training. This generalization of the curriculum reduced the efficacy of the pre-service training program.
- The training facility is located in an urban setting, while the Volunteers served almost exclusively in rural areas. This caused a disconnect between the cultural environment experienced by Volunteers during training and the cultural environment experienced by Volunteers in the rural areas.
- The Volunteers did not receive training in the basic skills needed in "every day" village life, which increased the anxiety associated with site posting and meant

the Volunteers were not prepared for vital and very basic aspects of living in a rural village.

Research Question Two

How effective was the pre-service training program in facilitating the transfer of learned technical, language, and cultural knowledge and skills to the work environment?

It was concluded that:

- Respondents found the training program effective generally, yet almost all identified at least one deficiency in an area of PST that affected the time it took to contribute to projects once posted to site.
- Many Volunteers were posted without the ability to communicate with beneficiaries in an effective and productive manner. While most respondents felt they were well equipped technically, the language ability of the respondents upon graduation from PST was generally not adequate for them to function effectively as extension agents. Additionally, only about half of the respondents felt confident in the acquired cross-cultural knowledge and skills.
- The pre-service training program generally failed to instill confidence in the respondents' self-perceived ability to function alone in a rural village setting.
- The tedious and exhaustive schedule of PST, combined with the added stress of the home stay, had a significant negative impact on the motivation and

enthusiasm of respondents, which cumulatively reduced the efficacy of the PST program with time.

- The substantial amount of information that was presented in PST resulted in some respondents neglecting certain areas of the training curriculum in order to attend to other areas they perceived as more important.
- In some instances, transfer of training was not possible because of work environment conditions that were outside of the respondents' control. The root cause of these work environment problems was the failure of the Peace Corps to fulfill the agency's responsibility of ensuring a work environment that facilitates the transfer of training.

Implications – Often it is not possible to determine the potential productivity of site without posting a Volunteer in that site. However, continual agency evaluation of each site will help to ensure that the presence of a Volunteer is warranted. Additionally, a thorough assessment of a site at the end of a Volunteer's term of service would allow a determination to be made on whether another Volunteer should be posted to the site.

- The absence of support and supervision of the respondents, once they were posted to site, had a detrimental impact on the respondent's initial and overall productivity.

Implications – A great deal of emphasis is placed on the Volunteers' ability to be self-sufficient and self-motivated. During the first months on site, it is unrealistic to assume that the Volunteer will have the productive competence needed to perform

at an acceptable level. Further, it would be beneficial to establish an evaluation mechanism that helps to ensure that Volunteers are exerting their best efforts to achieve assignment goals. Currently, it is possible for a Volunteer to complete their entire period of service without making substantial contributions to assignment-related projects. While it has been acknowledged that Peace Corps service is highly unpredictable and conditions at sites vary greatly, establishing a minimum standard of job performance would give Volunteers a specific goal toward which to work. This will ensure that Volunteers are actively attempting to transfer learned knowledge and skills to the work place (Baumgartel et al., 1984; Schein, 1985). Because some sites will be more productive, this standard of performance would not be based on criteria such as the number of ponds established or the kilograms of fish harvested, but rather measure extension-related activities performed by the Volunteer, such as the number of meetings held with farmers or the frequency of farmer visits.

Research Question Three

How did the psychological effects of culture shock and role shock affect the PCV's ability to function effectively as a change agent?

It was concluded that:

- The respondents were generally unprepared for the cultural shock that the transition from the training environment to the field caused and, resultantly, the adjustment process often took a considerable amount of time.

- Respondents had difficulty defining work and social roles once posted to site. During this time of adjustment, the respondents were generally unproductive.
- The support provided by the Peace Corps to the respondents once posted to site was minimal or non-existent, which extended the time and increased the difficulty of the adjustment process.

Summary of Conclusions

The job performance of respondents was affected by a combination of factors that resulted in diminished efficacy and overall value of the pre-service training program and exacerbated problems associated with the move from the training site to the field. These factors stemmed specifically from problems related to pre-service training, the effects of culture and role shock, and a lack of agency support.

The pre-service training program was described as effective generally, but because of the nature of Peace Corps service, any deficiencies in the training program were magnified once the respondents reached the field. Deficiencies in pre-service training were especially prominent in the language and cross-cultural components. In many instances, language and cultural training was too general and resulted in an increased learning curve once Volunteers were posted to site. Also, respondents tended to become accustomed to the culture and living conditions of urban Zambia that was experienced during pre-service training and were not instructed in the skills required to thrive in a village setting. Regardless, even a perfectly formulated pre-service training curriculum

would have been diminished by the tedious and exhaustive schedule of pre-service training and the information overload experienced by many respondents.

Additionally, the transition to the village not only magnified the deficiencies of pre-service training, but introduced new difficulties such as adjusting to a new cultural environment, defining role responsibilities and boundaries, and overcoming agency-related deficiencies such as a lack of support and the absence of a supervisory mechanism to ensure that the respondents were actively attempting to apply learned knowledge and skills to RAP-related projects.

Recommendations for Practice

According to Rogers (2003), communication is the cornerstone of the innovation-diffusion process. The purpose of the RAP project pre-service training program is to prepare the Volunteers for service as fish culture extension agents, and much of this preparation is targeted at facilitating the communication between the Volunteer and the beneficiaries. Indeed, before Volunteers can begin to contribute to the diffusion of aquaculture they must acquire specialized skills and knowledge that will enable them to become effective cross-cultural communicators and capable of adapting to the physical environment of Zambia. To this end, the researcher offers the following recommendations.

- 1) The number and duration of site visits during pre-service training should be increased and the Volunteers should visit the sites to which they will be assigned at least once during pre-service training (Blau & Boal, 1987;

Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901). This will require the assignment of sites to take place early in the pre-service training period, which will render site-specific language and cross-cultural training possible (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Bandura, 1982; Goldstein, 1986; Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901) and reduce Volunteer anxiety about the transition from the training environment to the work environment (Hawes and Kealey, 1981).

- 2) The technical component of the RAP pre-service training program should be taught separately from the other components. This would greatly diminish the negative effects of information overload and the loss of self-efficacy currently experienced by Volunteers (Bandura, 1982; Keller & Staelin, 1987; Marx, 1982; Schneider, 1987).
- 3) A number of changes need to be made in the level of agency support and supervision provided by the Peace Corps (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986). First, Volunteers need to receive agency support and supervision at site for the first three months after being posted. This will improve the initial performance of the Volunteers by increasing confidence (Huczynski & Lewis, 1980) and reducing the stress and anxiety caused by culture and role shock/strain. This support can most feasibly be offered through a local Zambian, as this will provide the Volunteer with insight into the village culture, local language, and the often obscure societal norms (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Wolfe & Snoek, 1962). Additionally, if a PCV is succeeding another PCV at a site, there needs to be a standardized set of information that is communicated that includes

details such as a general assessment of the village including a list of village members that the PCV has used for common chores such as cooking, washing, carpentry, etc., any pitfalls or successes that the outgoing PCV has had in diffusing aquaculture, a list of current fish farmers and an individualized assessment of their level of project dedication and achievement, identification of village members who have expressed interest in fish farming that should be contacted by the incoming PCV, and discussion of impending issues or problems in areas such as farmer discontent, difficulties with water rights, farmer infighting or jealousy (Hawes & Kealey, 1981). Further, the outgoing Volunteer should make a frank assessment of whether the site has achieved a level of project productivity or has the potential to achieve a level of productivity that would justify the presence of another PCV. Transferring this type of information helps insure that the development efforts of successive Volunteers will be a coordinated, complimentary endeavor rather than a succession of disjointed, isolated attempts.

- 4) The Peace Corps must involve project beneficiaries in project planning to a much greater degree (Rogers, 2003). Environmental factors other than topography, rainfall, and climate must be considered when selecting PCV sites. The work environment at the site must allow the transfer of training to take place, and current sites that contain conditions that preclude the Volunteers from achieving success in diffusing aquaculture must be abandoned (Gagne, 1962; Gist et al, 1990).

Recommendations for Research

The results of this study have illuminated avenues for further research.

- 1) Language ability proved to be a primary factor that affected job performance.

In order to determine how job performance is affected if the Volunteers do not have a language barrier to overcome, there is a need for this study to be replicated in countries where the Peace Corps requires prospective Volunteers to enter PST with applicable language ability. For example, this study should be replicated using RPCVs who served in technical assignment areas in Spanish or French-speaking countries where they were already proficient in the language before entering PST.

- 2) This study investigated the factors that affected job performance from the change agent's point of view. There is a need to conduct a similar study from the beneficiary's perspective in order to determine what the beneficiaries perceived as the factors that affect job performance.

Closing Statement

In this study, I identified factors that affected the job performance of PCVs working in the RAP project, which included deficiencies in language and cross-cultural training in addition to agency-related failures in areas such as project planning and implementation and PCV supervision and support. Moreover, I made recommendations that may mitigate or reduce the negative effects of these factors. It is my hope that this study will be of practical use and not simply gather dust on a library shelf. Naturally, I

think the RAP project administrators will find the conclusions and recommendations especially useful. While some of the recommendations may not be economically or logistically feasible now, the implementation of many will require nothing other than an open mind and a willingness to evolve institutional thinking.

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APPENDIX A

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

FOIA Request

Peace Corps
FOIA Officer
Office of Administrative Services
1111 20th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20526

Dear FOIA Team:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

I request that a copy of the following document(s) be provided to me: pre-service training documents for Zambia; specifically, documents and other materials that are currently used for cross-cultural and technical training for aquaculture.

In order to help you determine my status for the purpose of assessing fees, you should know that I am affiliated with an educational institution and this request is made for a scholarly purpose and not for commercial use.

I am willing to pay fees for this request up to a maximum of \$50.00. If you estimate that the fees will exceed this limit, please inform me first.

I also include a telephone number at which I can be contacted if necessary to discuss aspects of my request.

Sincerely,

Clay Trant
Graduate Assistant
Texas A&M University
228 Scoates Hall
2116 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-2116
Office: 979-458-2700
Fax: 979-458-6296
E-mail: ctrant@aged.tamu.edu

Peace Corps' Response to FOIA Request

Clay Trant
Graduate Assistant
Texas A & M University
228 Scoates Hall
2116 TAMU
College Station, TX, 77843

RE: FOIA Case # 03-046

Dear Mr. Trant:

This is a final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in which you request the following:

"...pre-service training documents for Zambia; specifically, documents and other materials that are currently used for cross-cultural and technical training for aquaculture."

Enclosed please find copies of all documents we could locate that are responsive to your request. This includes a US/Peace Corps Zambia Cross-Culture Trainee's Handbook and the RAP Technical Training Handbook, A Guide for Fish Farming Extension Agents.

We hope the information provided meets your needs. While our regulations allow us to recover a portion of the cost of responding to FOIA requests, this cost has fallen below the \$25 minimum, resulting in no charge. If you have any questions regarding this response, please feel free to call me direct at 202-692-1124. Thank you for your interest in the Peace Corps.

Very truly yours,

Noelle Frangipane, J.D.
FOIA Officer

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Questionnaire Information Sheet

Please read carefully

- The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that inhibit or contribute to the initial effectiveness of Peace Corps Volunteers working in aquaculture projects in Zambia and will be conducted from August 2003 through September 2003.
- One questionnaire, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Questionnaire, will be provided to you in this research study.
- You are one of thirty participants in this study.
- You will be asked to complete the entire questionnaire and it will take you approximately thirty-five minutes, but this time may vary depending on the length of your answers.
- Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- There is a possibility that someone could surreptitiously access this website and view your responses.
- You will not be penalized by the answers you give on the questionnaire or by the number of questions you choose to answer.
- Your identity and responses are confidential and nothing in the study will connect your identity with your responses.
- You may refuse to answer any questions for any reason.
- This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Support Services, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067.
- Ensure that you have read and understand the explanation provided to you.
- Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.
- By clicking on the "Proceed to Survey" link, you signify that you have had any questions regarding this study answered satisfactorily and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. [Click here to print this page](#)

Please input the following information:
(Red text indicates a required field)

First name:

First letter of last name (Last initial):

Email Address:

If you would prefer to complete this survey by telephone, please enter your phone number and the best time for me to call below and then press the Phone button. Otherwise, leave these fields blank.

Telephone Number:

Contact Day/Time:

Continue To Questionnaire

Phone

Cancel

For questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact:

Clay Trant, Principal Investigator
Department of Agricultural Education
(979) 458-2700
228 Scoates Hall / MS 2116
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843

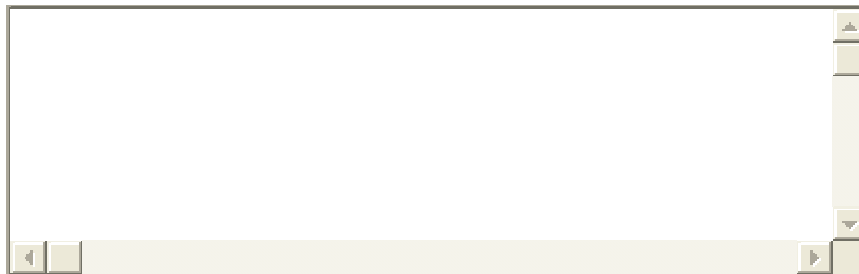
Dr. Kim Dooley, Committee Chair
Department of Agricultural Education
(979) 862-7180
131 Scoates Hall / MS 2116
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843

You may choose to answer any or all of the questions below. When you are finished, click the Submit button.

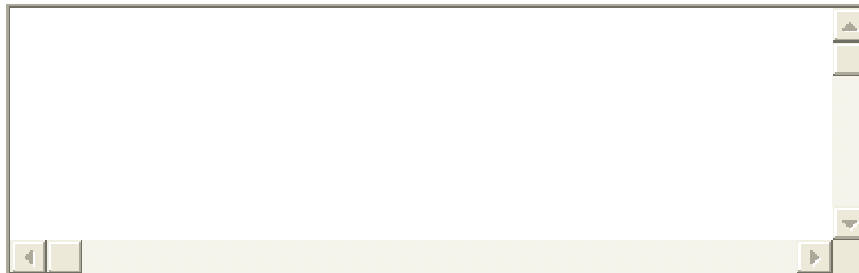
1. What was your specific assignment and where and when did you serve (month/year to month/year)?



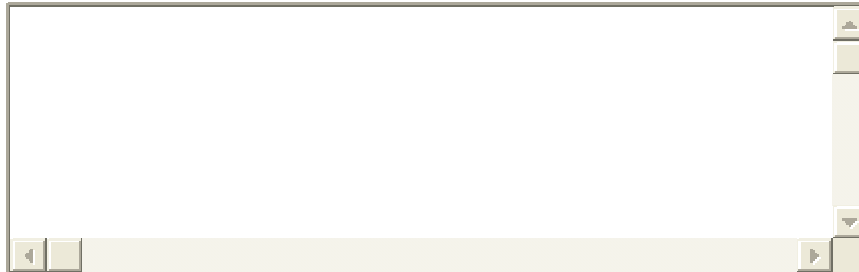
2. Describe your educational background and professional work experience before you served as a PCV.



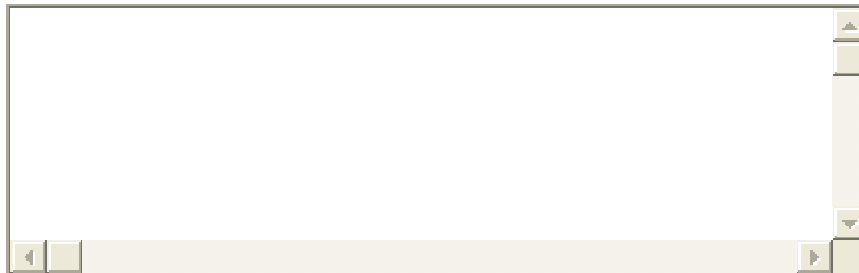
3. Describe your experience in the pre-service training program and comment on how effective you think it was in preparing you for service.



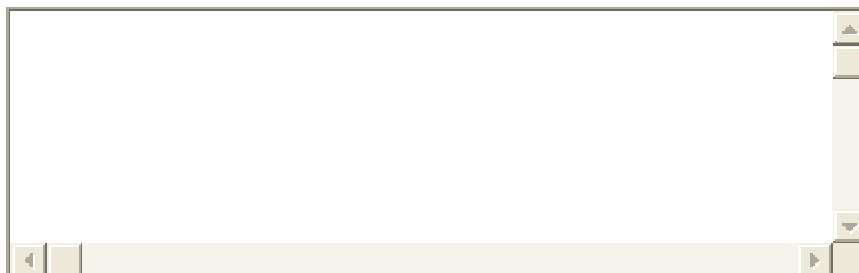
4. Once you were posted to your site, how long did it take before you felt you were able to contribute significantly to projects in your assignment area?



5. What factors do you believe contributed to the amount of time it took from the time you were posted to your site, until you were able to contribute significantly to your project?



6. Upon reflection, after arriving at your site, what do you believe would have enabled you to contribute effectively and more quickly to projects in your assignment area?



7. What is the single most important recommendation that you would have made to PCVs that would enable them to contribute effectively and more quickly to projects?



Submit Reset

APPENDIX C
PEER DEBRIEFING

Thesis Research Peer Debrief Memorandum

TO: Dr. Kim Dooley

FROM: Clay Trant

SUBJECT: Peer debriefing on research conducted on PCV job performance in the
RAP project

DATE: September 16, 2003.

The following is a summary of the research findings to date and the emerging themes I have identified.

Pre-Service-Training Content / Efficacy of PCV Preparation

Category 1: Pre-service training elements and curriculum

- Pre-service training is effective overall (I1, I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I12, I13, I16, I17)
- Some respondents had deficiencies in technical, language, or cross-cultural knowledge and skills (D1, D2, I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I11, I12, I14, I16)
- The technical component of the pre-service training curriculum is thorough and well-taught (I3, I4, I5, I8, I11, I12, I13, I17)
- Site visits were extremely beneficial (I2, I7, I12, I14)
- The home stay was generally viewed as beneficial, but did have drawbacks (I5, I10, I12, I14)
- Many trainees experienced information overload do to the exhaustive and tedious nature of pre-service training (I2, I8, I12, I14, I17)

Category 2: Language Training

- A primary factor affecting job performance (D1, D2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I16)
- Language training is region specific, but not site specific (I15)

Category 3: Cross-Cultural Training

- Cross-cultural training is generalized to the extent where it is not effective (I12, I13, I14)

Category 4: Agency Programming Issues

- PCVs are not assigned to sites until the very end of training
- There is minimal agency support at site (I1, I2, I3, I5, I7)
- There is minimal agency supervision at site (I3, I4, I10, I12, I16)

Culture Shock/Role Shock

Category One: Culture Shock

- The process of adjusting to village life was a significant factor that affected job performance (D2, I1, I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I13, I14, I16)

Category Two: Role Shock

- Volunteers had trouble defining both work and social roles with the village society once posted to site (D1, D2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I11, I15, I16, I17)

APPENDIX D
AUDIT TRAIL

Audit Trail

(In Order of Appearance in Research Findings)

1. I5 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 5th Respondent, August, 17, 2003
2. I10 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 10th Respondent, August 26, 2003
3. I12 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 12th Respondent, August 29, 2003
4. I14 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 14th Respondent, August 30, 2003
5. I7 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 7th Respondent, August 21, 2003
6. I2 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 2nd Respondent, August 17, 2003
7. I1 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 1st Respondent, August 16, 2003
8. I3 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 3rd Respondent, August 17, 2003
9. I4 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 4th Respondent, August 17, 2003
10. I6 RPCV, RAP Project Zambia; 6th Respondent; August 20, 2003
11. I8 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 8th Respondent, August 21, 2003
12. I9 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 9th Respondent, August 26, 2003
13. I11 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 11th Respondent, August 28, 2003
14. I13 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 13th Respondent, August 29, 2003
15. I16 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 16th Respondent, September 3, 2003
16. I15 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 15th Respondent, September 3, 2003
17. I17 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; 17th Respondent, September 10,
2003
18. D1 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; Web-based Journal of experience as
a Volunteer, Accessed August 15, 2003

19. D2 RPCV, RAP project Zambia; Web-Journal of experience as a
Volunteer, Accessed August 15, 2003

APPENDIX E
RESPONSE LETTER TO RPCVS

Response Letter to RPCVs

[Respondent Name],

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that inhibit or facilitate the ability of PCVs to contribute promptly and effectively to projects in aquaculture in Zambia, once posted to their sites.

By sharing your experiences, thoughts, and opinions regarding your Peace Corps service, you will make this study very beneficial to the Peace Corps and your successors in the RAP project in Zambia.

The on-line survey is located here: rpcvsurvey.webhop.org

Again, thanks for your help.

Clay Trant
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Department of Agricultural Education
Texas A&M University
Office: 979-458-2700
E-mail: ctrant@aged.tamu.edu

VITA

NAME	Clay Allen Trant
PERMANENT ADDRESS	2822 Stonewall Court Tyler, Texas 75701
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Master of Science from Texas A&M University in May 2004 with a major area of study in agricultural education. Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University in May 2001 with a major area of study in sociology.